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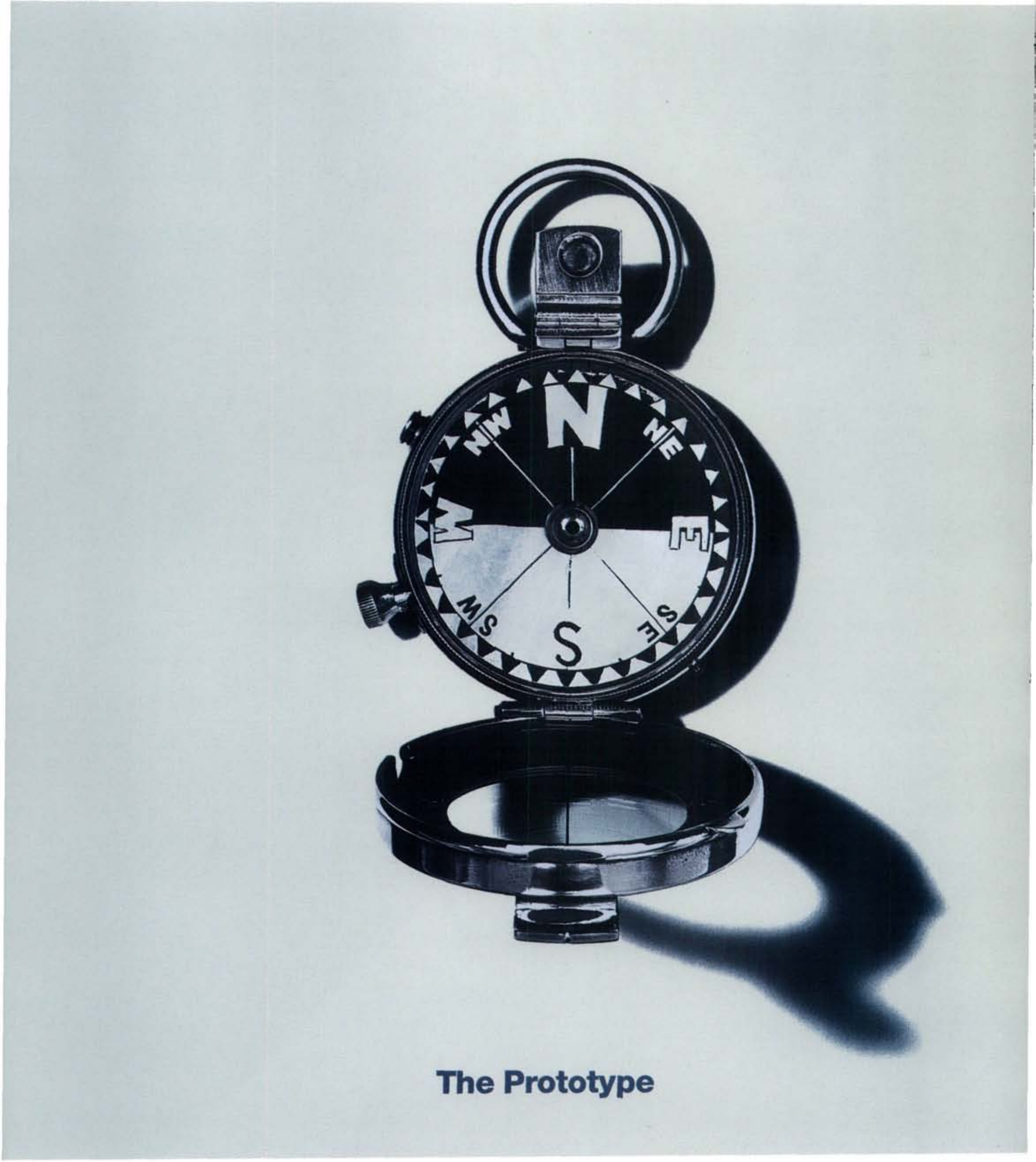

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THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 31, 1997

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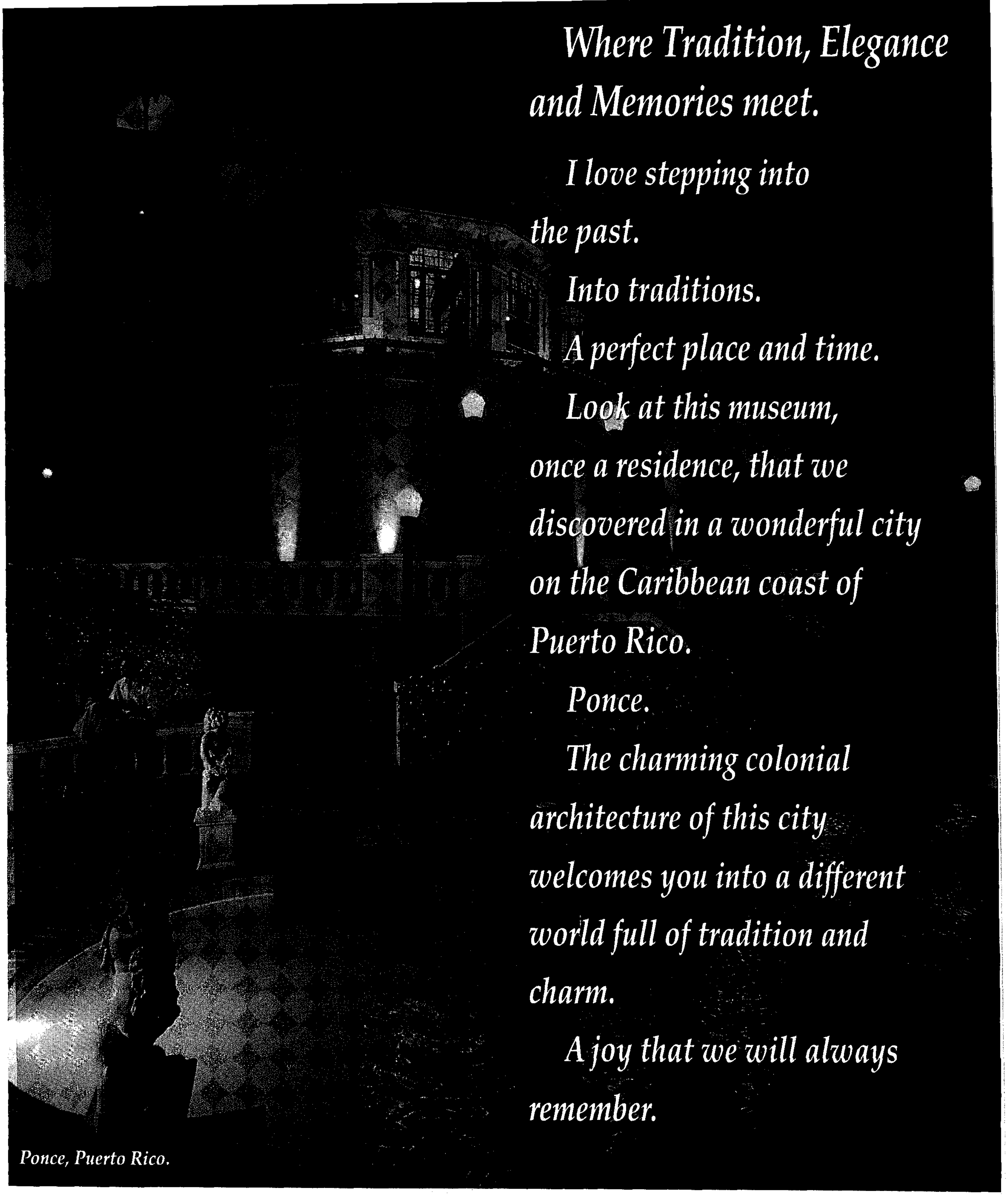

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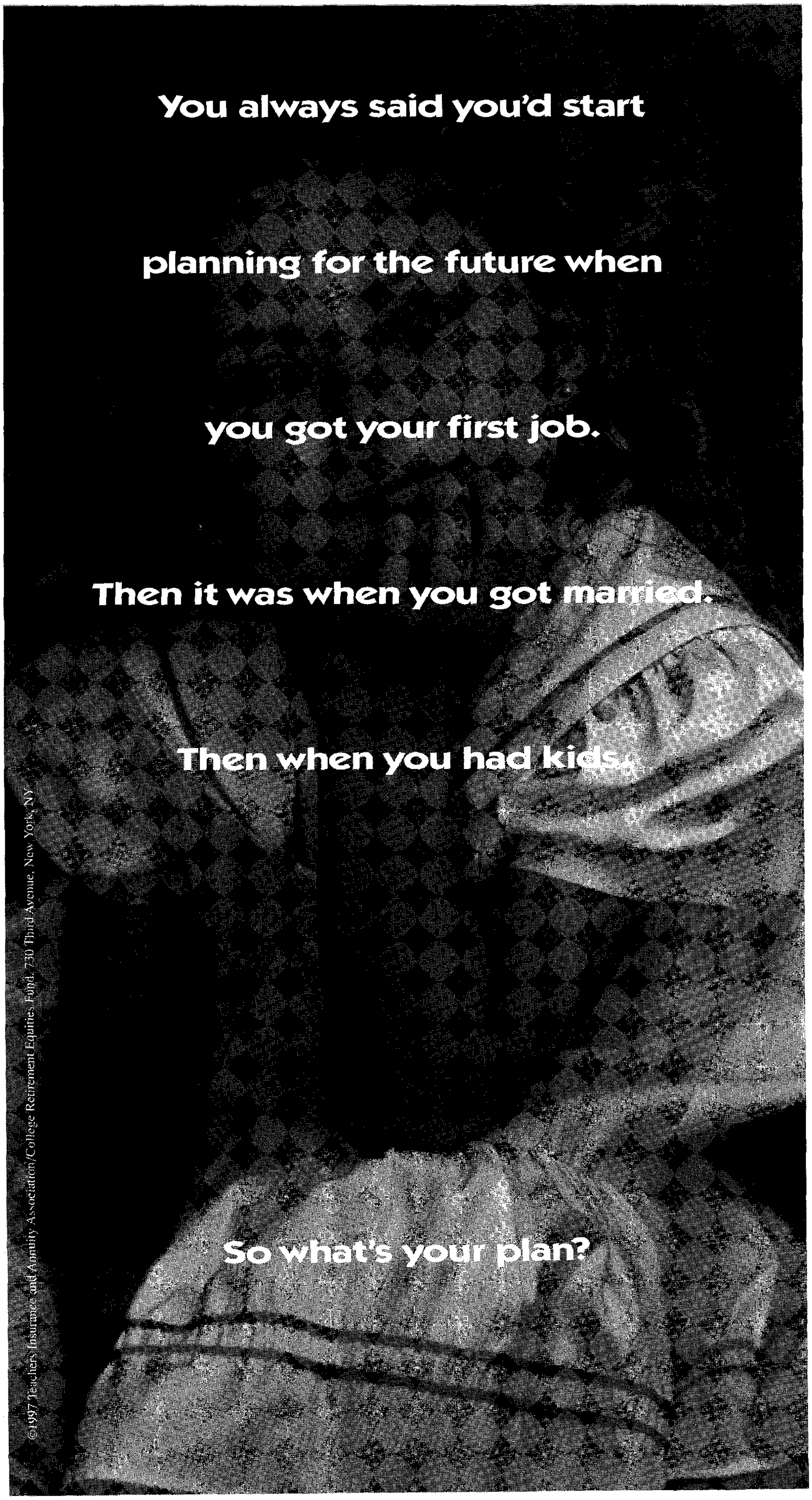
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COMMENT

OSCAR'S CLOSET

After all, it's only make-believe.

At about the time this issue of *The New Yorker* opens wide, as they say on the multiplex circuit, a billion or so television viewers will be tuning in, with the usual mixture of excitement and resignation, to the worldwide broadcast of the annual awards of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. No doubt there are surprises in store. At this writing, though, it's safe to predict that (a) the show will be long, (b) the production numbers will galumph, and (c) no Oscar will go to a leading man or leading lady who is openly gay, because in the Hollywood bestiary no such animal exists.

There is no obvious reason that this—i.e., (c)—should be so. Like every other enclave of creative and would-be creative people in the country, the movie colony is thoroughly relaxed about homosexuality. The obvious justice of gay rights is no more controversial in Hollywood than the proposition that happy endings sell. Familiarity has bred tolerance and respect, and was doing so within the industry, if not on the screen, long before the Hays office packed it in—one reason, perhaps, that the prodigal son of the Hollywood family, Ronald Reagan, never showed much sympathy for the homophobia of some of his worshippers on the political right. (Reagan took his stand in 1978, when he came out, so to speak, against a California ballot initiative that would have made it illegal for gays to teach in the public schools.)

Ever since the closet door swung ajar, a generation ago, movie folk have been streaming through it. In the nineteen-nineties, it's not just set designers and wardrobe mistresses and hair stylists who can afford to be openly homosexual. It's perfectly O.K. for directors and producers to be gay, too. Ditto screenwriters, moguls, agents, publicists, caterers, gaffers, best boys, script girls, and "supporting" actors and actresses. But leading men and leading ladies? Hollywood doesn't think so.

What's especially queer about this is that, while it's still not O.K. for stars to *be* gay, it has become O.K. for them to *play* gay. Doing so was once seen as a career-killer, but in recent years the list of well-known actors who have portrayed sympathetic gay characters on the screen and lived to tell the tale has included Antonio Banderas, Cher, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Tom Hanks, Mariel Hemingway, Jonathan Pryce, Will Smith, Wesley Snipes, Terence Stamp, Patrick Stewart, Meryl Streep, Patrick Swayze, Uma Thurman, Jennifer Tilly, and Robin

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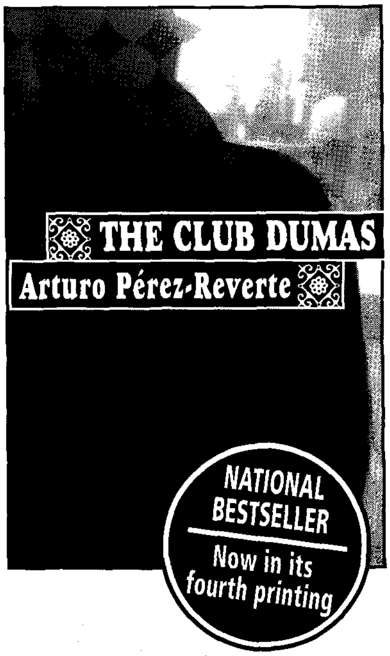

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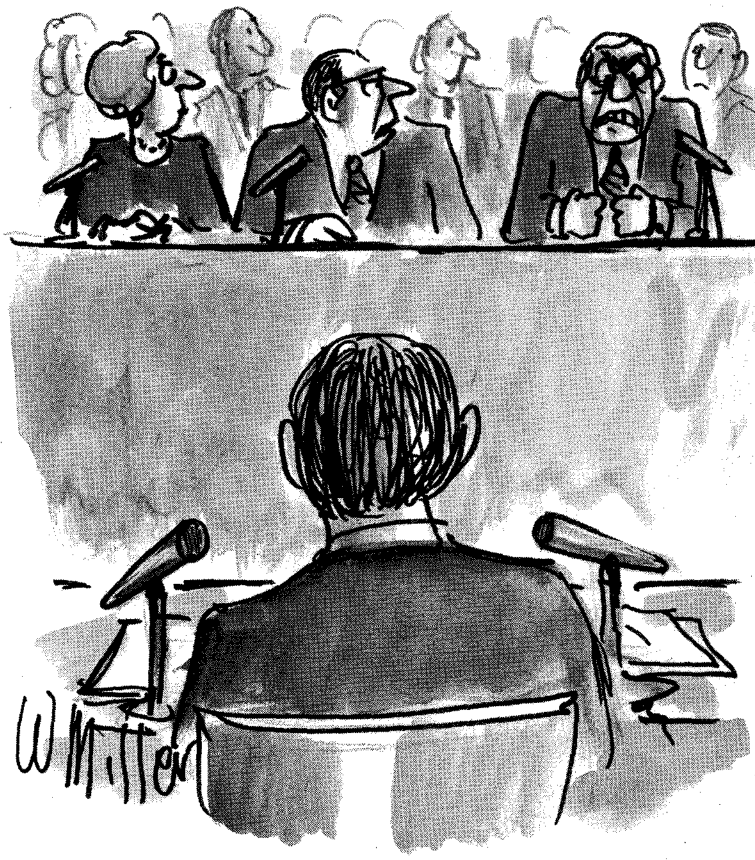


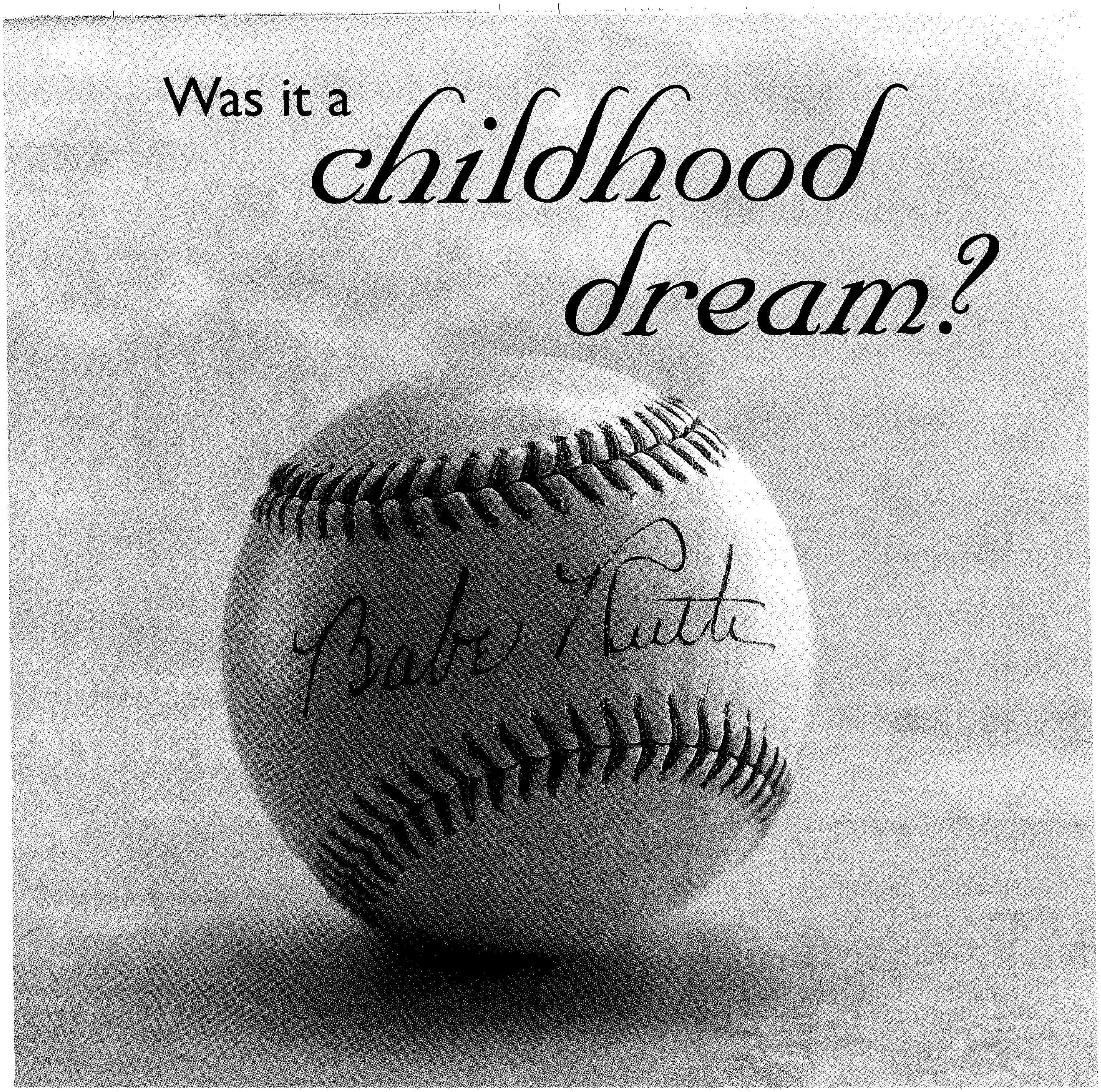
"We appreciate your concern over his investments, Senator, but I do think 'Off with his head!' is uncalled for."

• •

Williams. There are no important examples of this phenomenon in reverse. The industry evidently believes that audiences will readily suspend disbelief to watch a notorious Don Juan pretend to be a faithful husband, a nice Midwestern girl pretend to be a space alien, a bookish environmentalist pretend to be a psychotic serial killer, or, for that matter, a confirmed heterosexual pretend to be a raging queen. But under no circumstances can Romeo be played by someone who, off duty, might prefer Mercutio to Juliet.

Of course, Hollywood is not in business to provide moral instruction. The all but universal expectation last week was that the Oscar would go not to "Fargo," the actual best picture of the year, but to "The English Patient"—a worthy film in many ways, but one whose hero turns British military secrets over to the Nazis in exchange for an airplane with which to rescue his mistress. (This stands the moral world of, say, "Casablanca" on its head: it's as if the Ralph Fiennes character were saying, "I guess the outcome of the war against Hitler doesn't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world compared to the problems of two little people.") And "The English Patient" is the industry at its most high-minded. To ask Hollywood to risk what it apparently fears would be retribution at the box office just in order to strike another blow at antihomosexual bigotry is perhaps asking too much.

Yet the romantic-lead taboo, once someone gets around to defying it, will probably crumble away like the now forgotten assumption that no one Catholic, Southern, or divorced could ever be President. A Gallup poll that was commissioned by *Entertainment Weekly* in 1995 showed that the vast majority of moviegoers simply don't care about the offscreen (or onscreen, for that matter) affectional preferences of their favorite stars. Sir Ian McKellen, the great British Shakespearean, predicted not long ago that "the first young actor of talent who comes out and stars in a movie and is a hit will be the most famous actor in the world and make a fortune for his agents and his managers and producers and the studio." Well, why not? —HENDRIK HERTZBERG



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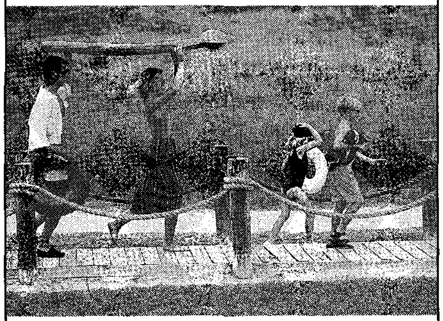

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THE MAIL

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

It is by now a platitude that all human behavior emerges from the complex interaction of biology and environment, of nature and nurture. Why, then, should we be surprised when scientists begin to identify a few social and biological determinants of violent behavior ("Damaged," by Malcolm Gladwell, February 24th & March 3rd)? But to assume, as some of the scientists in the article do, that these factors absolve criminals of their culpability poses a more difficult and fundamental question: If we are not responsible for behavior that is biologically constrained or environmentally conditioned, can we be responsible for anything we do?

DAVID KENT, M.D.
Cambridge, Mass.

I wish to respond to readers of Mr. Gladwell's article who may have misinterpreted my work and assumed that I advocate releasing dangerous people. I do not. There are many individuals who, by virtue of their neuropsychiatric vulnerabilities, cannot control their rage. Society must be protected from these people; they must be placed in secure settings. Unfortunately, the nature of our prisons is such that prison provides all of the ingredients necessary to engender and enhance violence (including isolation, deprivation, danger, and pain). Perhaps, with a little ingenuity, we could do the opposite.

DOROTHY OTNOW LEWIS, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry
New York University School of Medicine

Jeffrey Rosen, in "One Angry Woman," suggests that mistrials caused by holdout black jurors who have various inadequacies ("seared by racism," "misinformed," "intellectually lazy, or intellectually dishonest") sabotage the workings of the criminal-justice system. I believe that the blame lies not with these holdouts but with the system that causes them such trepidation. In Comment ("Marketing Justice"), Henry Louis Gates, Jr., mentions the purpose that the jury system is meant to serve: "Citizen juries confer legitimacy upon the most invasive thing a state can do: strip a person of life, liberty, or property." The rising number of mistrials indicates that more and more citizens are not willing to legitimate the state's actions.

JOANNA SCHWARTZ
New York City

When a lone white male juror stands his ground against a majority that attempts to pressure him into compromising, we laud his principles. Yet Jeffrey Rosen blames black women for doing the very same thing. Indeed, the actions of one of the jurors Rosen condemns parallel those of Henry Fonda in "Twelve Angry Men." So what is interesting is not that a rising number of juries are unable to reach a verdict but our reaction to that fact. Instead of bemoaning the frequency of hung juries, Rosen ought to consider the success of a system that now grants women and minorities the right to hold a differing opinion—a right that it once bestowed only on white men.

ROB RADER
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Mr. Rosen interviewed "prosecutors, judges, and . . . holdout jurors" but apparently overlooked the entire defense bar in pursuit of his theory about angry black women. I have been a deputy public defender for more than twelve years, and have had many hung juries. The more than eighty-per-cent conviction rate in Los Angeles retrials which Rosen cites does not mean that the problem in the first trial was always an irrational juror. In my experience, many hung juries have resulted from police or prosecutorial error, gaping holes in the case which went unnoticed until it was too late, and missing or uncoöperative witnesses—problems that are often solved before the second trial.

ELLIE SCHNEIR
Santa Monica, Calif.

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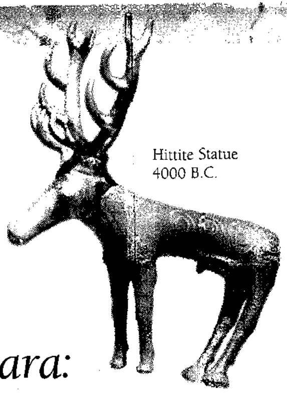

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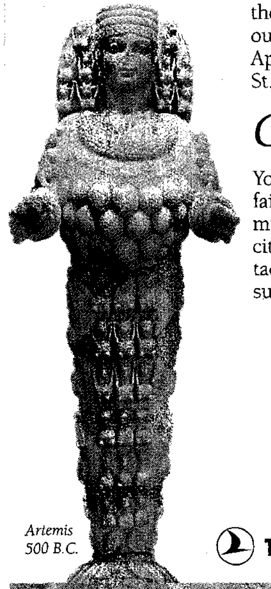

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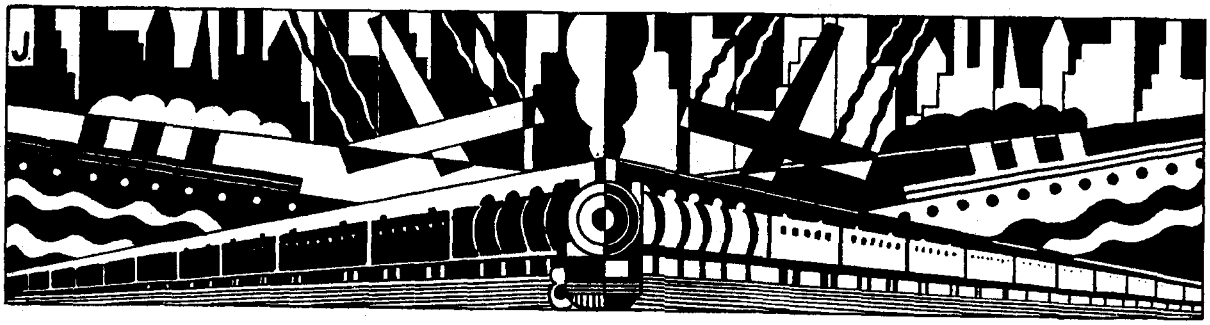

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

An American Daughter—Wendy Wasserstein's new play stars Kate Nelligan as a professor undergoing a Senate confirmation hearing for the post of Surgeon General. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie—Twenty years later, and she still doesn't look a day over eleven. With Nell Carter as Miss Hannigan, Conrad John Shuck as Daddy Warbucks, and Brittny Kissinger in the title role. Directed by Martin Charnin, who also wrote the lyrics; book by Thomas Meehan, music by Charles Strouse. Opens March 26 at 6:30. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dealer's Choice—Manhattan Theater Club presents Patrick Marber's comedy, set during a poker game in a London restaurant. Directed by John Tillinger. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Doctor! Doctor!—A comic revue about the medical profession, by Peter Ekstrom and David DeBoy. Opens March 26 at 6:45. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

A Doll's House—The acclaimed West End production of Ibsen's drama, starring Janet McTeer as Nora. Anthony Page is the director. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—Lesley Ann Warren, John Pizzarelli, and Margaret Whiting lead the cast in a celebration of the songs of Johnny Mercer. Directed and choreographed by Wayne Cilento. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

God's Heart—Joe Mantello is the director of a new play by Craig Lucas, in which a group of eight Americans connects in spite of (rather than through) their faxes, phones, and computers. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Green Heart—Charles Busch (book) and Rusty Magee (music and lyrics) have joined forces on this comic thriller, a musical adaptation of Jack Ritchie's short story about a broke playboy with dark designs on a rich botanist. In previews through March 30. Opens April 1 at 6:45. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Hairy Ape—A Wooster Group production of O'Neill's drama, starring Willem Dafoe, Kate Valk, and Peyton Smith. In previews. (Selwyn, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Robin Phillips is the director of this musical based on Robert Louis Stevenson's tale of the two-faced physician. Book and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse; music by Frank Wildhorn. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite—William H. Macy directs a comedy by Quincy Long, starring Guy Boyd, Jordan Lage, and J. R. Horne as three loggers who take a road trip to Canada. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

On House—The WPA Theatre presents Kevin Heelan's black comedy about corrupt hospital workers. In previews. (519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

The Plough and the Stars—Sean O'Casey's 1926 tragedy, set in Dublin in 1916, during the Easter Rebellion, in an Irish Repertory Theatre staging directed by Charlotte Moore. In previews. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Sympathetic Magic—From Lanford Wilson, a new drama about a couple caught on the horns of a dilemma. Directed by Marshall W. Mason. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Titanic—A new musical about the ill-fated ocean liner, directed by Richard Jones. Peter Stone wrote the book, Maury Yeston the lyrics and music. Previews begin March 27. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—Rip Torn and Shirley Knight star in Horton Foote's 1995 drama, set in Houston in the nineteen-fifties, about a couple living in the aftermath of their only child's death. Robert Falls is the director. Two previews on March 26. Opens March 27 at 6:45. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

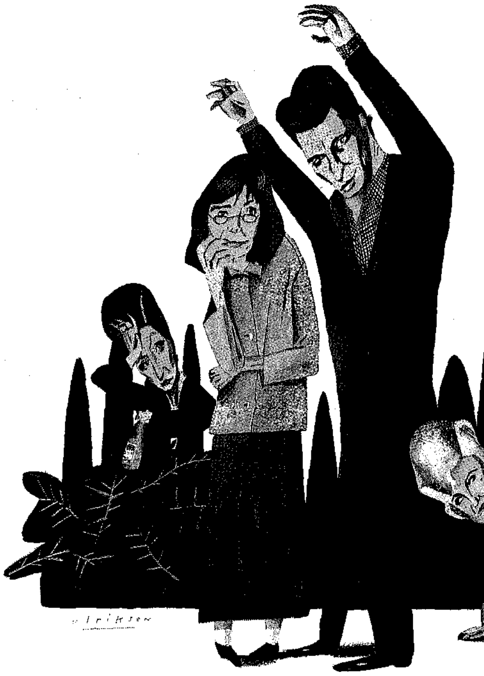
Another Part of the House—A reimagining of Federico Garcia Lorca's 1936 drama, "The House of Bernarda Alba." The sexual politics in a house where five sisters, their mother, their grandmother, and a female slave are trapped, to varying degrees, are certainly something we're more attuned to these days. But the playwright, Migdalia Cruz, gives us more melodrama and near-psychobabble than feminism; the luminous performance by Irma St. Paule, as the grandmother, and the nervy energy of Sarah Erde, as the youngest granddaughter, can't create insight on their own. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes April 6.)

Antony and Cleopatra—Vanessa Redgrave and David Harewood are the leads in Redgrave's production, and they are a startlingly electric pair of lovers; unfortunately, "startling" is also the word for the gap between the star performances and those of the secondary characters. It's an uneven evening, made more so by the muddle of historical eras represented on the stage: there's graffiti, in English, spray-painted on Roman façades; there's a reproduction of part of a Botticelli painting in the background; and there is—easy does it, Vanessa!—a phalanx of microphones on Octavius Caesar's podium. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer depicts the legendary actor, in a new play written by William Luce and directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bunny Bunny—A comedy by Alan Zweibel, one of the original "Saturday Night Live" writers, about his fourteen-year friendship with Gilda Radner, starring Bruno Kirby and Paula Cale. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the 1975 Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed this time around by Ann Reinking) is about a woman who gets away with murder. This razzle-dazzle



Ruth Williamson, Karen Trott, David Andrew McDonald, and Alison Fraser, in Charles Busch and Rusty Magee's "The Green Heart."

MARK ULRIKSEN

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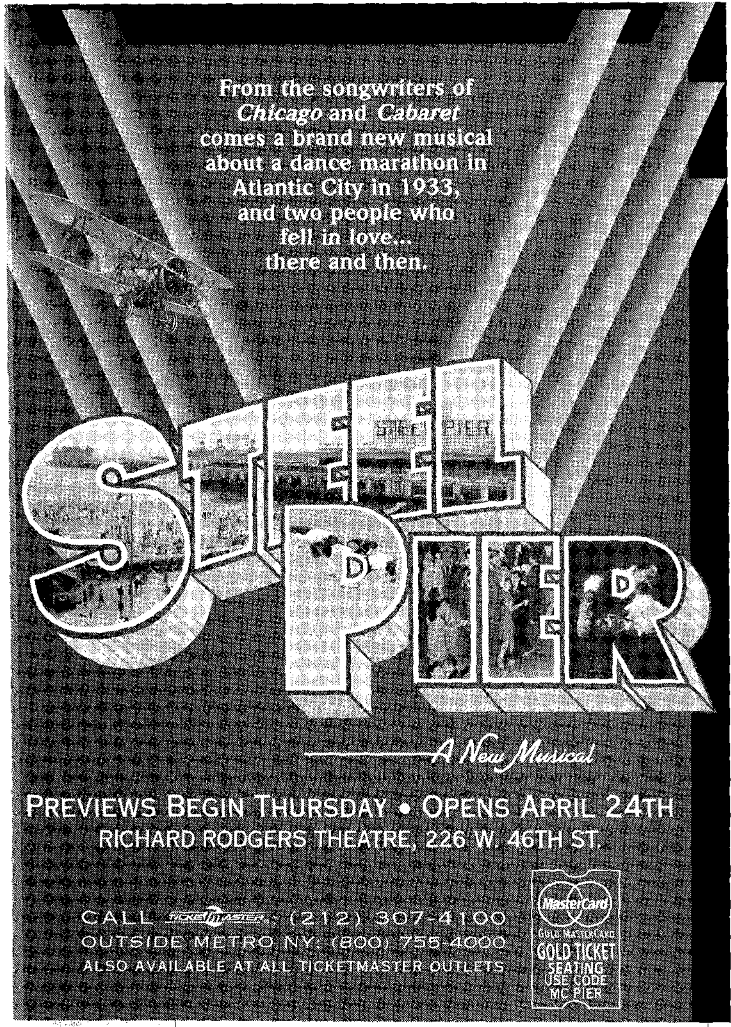

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concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/25/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Easter—A Naked Angels production of Will Schefer's play about an outlaw couple trying to deal with their past. (Theatre 3, 311 W. 43rd St. 397-7841. Closes March 31.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in the latest edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Genesis—Actor and storyteller Max McLean presents a one-man show, a co-adaptation with Buzz McLaughlin of the first book of the Bible. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Good as New—Manhattan Class Company's production of Peter Hedges' bittersweet new comedy. On the surface it's about the effects of a woman's face-lift on her husband and her hyperarticulate sixteen-year-old daughter, but it ultimately goes deeper, examining "the thin strings that connect us," as the father puts it, and asking such big questions as whether it's always best to tell the truth. There's some terrific acting by Laura Esterman and John Spencer as the couple. Brian Mertes directed; Rob Odorisio designed the clever sets. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes April 6.)

The Guardsman—The Hungarian-born playwright Ferenc Molnár's 1924 drama, about the romantic machinations of a Viennese actor and his actress wife. Presented by the Pearl Theatre Company. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Horse Country—C. J. Hopkins's comic exploration of contemporary American culture stars Dan Berkey and Eric Dean Scott as a standup duo. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes April 6.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel, and the Vineyard Theatre has given it a beautifully spare and lucid production. With insight and humor, Vogel opens up a subject previously narrowed by fury, voyeurism, and melodrama. Under the excellent direction of Mark Brokaw, both Ms. Parker and Mr. Morse give captivating, sympathetic performances, and the rest of the cast is exceptional, too. (108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In his new play, a romantic comedy of manners set in Atlanta (where he grew up) in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. The show has plenty of laughs, the actors (particularly Celia Weston and Dana Ivey as the central family's sweet-and-sour matriarchs) are well cast, and even though Uhry wraps up the ending too neatly, he does it movingly. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

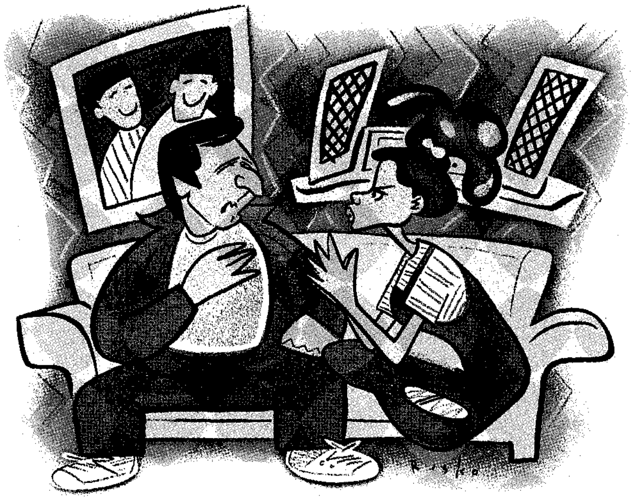
The Maids—Genet's 1947 play, in a multimedia staging by the Zzyzx Studio. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 252-3552. Closes March 29.)

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown—The Chilean-born playwright Guillermo Reyes's one-man show stars Felix A. Pire as a variety of gay Hispanic immigrants. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Minor Demons—A big-time lawyer who returns to his small home town clashes with childhood friends when he is hired to defend a sixteen-year-old murder suspect. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Names—A portrait of members of the former Group Theatre cracking under pressure from the House Un-American Activities Committee. The playwright-director, Mark Kemble, has invented a meeting of the core personalities just before Elia Kazan and Clifford Odets named names and John Garfield died, and it very convincingly encapsulates the effect of HUAC on their longstanding relationships. Robert Ari, as Harold Clurman, creates a sane center, and Tovah Feldshuh, as Stella Adler, is particularly good at registering the changes they've all been put through. The rest of the cast is uneven, and the second act is too full of speeches, but the show is fun as gossip and moving as history. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes March 30.)

Once Upon a Mattress—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical, but she deserves a vehicle that, to paraphrase Jerome Kern, is not merely lovely to look at but delightful to know. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



Bruno Kirby and Paula Cale, in "Bunny Bunny."

ROBERT RISKO

One Flea Spare—In Naomi Wallace's haunting play, set in the plague year of 1665, the owners of a quarantined London town house (Jon De Vries and the expert Dianne Wiest) find themselves suddenly cohabiting with two refuge-seeking vagrants. Confinement turns into a kind of role-playing ground where the lower orders literally find themselves in their masters' shoes, and each character tests the sexual waters. The play doesn't surrender its meanings easily, but its beautiful poetic surface and its powerful sexual subtext reveal an original imagination. The stately direction is by Ron Daniel. (3/24/97) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes March 29.)

Play On!—A female songwriter leaves the South for Harlem, in a musical the playwright Cheryl L. West has based on "Twelfth Night." Directed by Sheldon Epps, with choreography by Mercedes Ellington; the songs are by Duke Ellington. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Present Laughter—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Psychopathia Sexualis—John Patrick Shanley's new comedy, about a man (Andrew McCarthy) who can't make love to his fiancée unless a pair of his father's argyle socks is within reach, is blessed with two wonderfully funny performances: Daniel Gerroll's, as a friend of the feckless fetishist, and Edward Herrmann's, as a hilariously inappropriate psychiatrist (he bangs a gavel on his desk to end sessions). Herrmann, the straw that has stirred many a theatrical drink, has been absent from the New York stage for several years, and his warm, outsized presence and perennial professionalism make you grateful for his return. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A Question of Mercy—Out of the tangled issues raised by assisted suicide, David Rabe has manufactured a fascinating meditation posing as melodrama. An initially reluctant retired surgeon (the persuasive Zach Grenier), after consulting with Thomas (Stephen Spinella, superb and spindly) and his dying mate, Anthony (the powerful Juan Carlos Hernandez), takes charge of their plan to end Anthony's pain. The mystery around which the intelligent script circles is whether Anthony genuinely wants to die. Well directed by Douglas Hughes. (3/24/97) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes March 30.)

Stanley—Circle in the Square springs back to life with this triumphant mounting of the Royal National Theatre production of Pam Gems's play about the British artist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). Antony Sher's portrayal of Spencer, whose narcissism knew no bounds, is prodigiously energetic and emotional—and, against all odds, sympathetic, even as he abandons his wife, Hilda (Deborah Findlay), to marry a superficial lesbian (Anna Chancellor) whose beauty he cannot resist. The play itself has its limitations (too much talk about the meaning of life and art), but Sher's performance doesn't. John Caird, the director, and his set designer, Tim Hatley, have used the available space well, surrounding the audience with reproductions of Spencer's paintings and turning the theatre into a cathedral of art. (3/10/97) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Stonewall Jackson's House—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy, about a woman who pushes the racial envelope, hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe brings its North American tour to New York. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

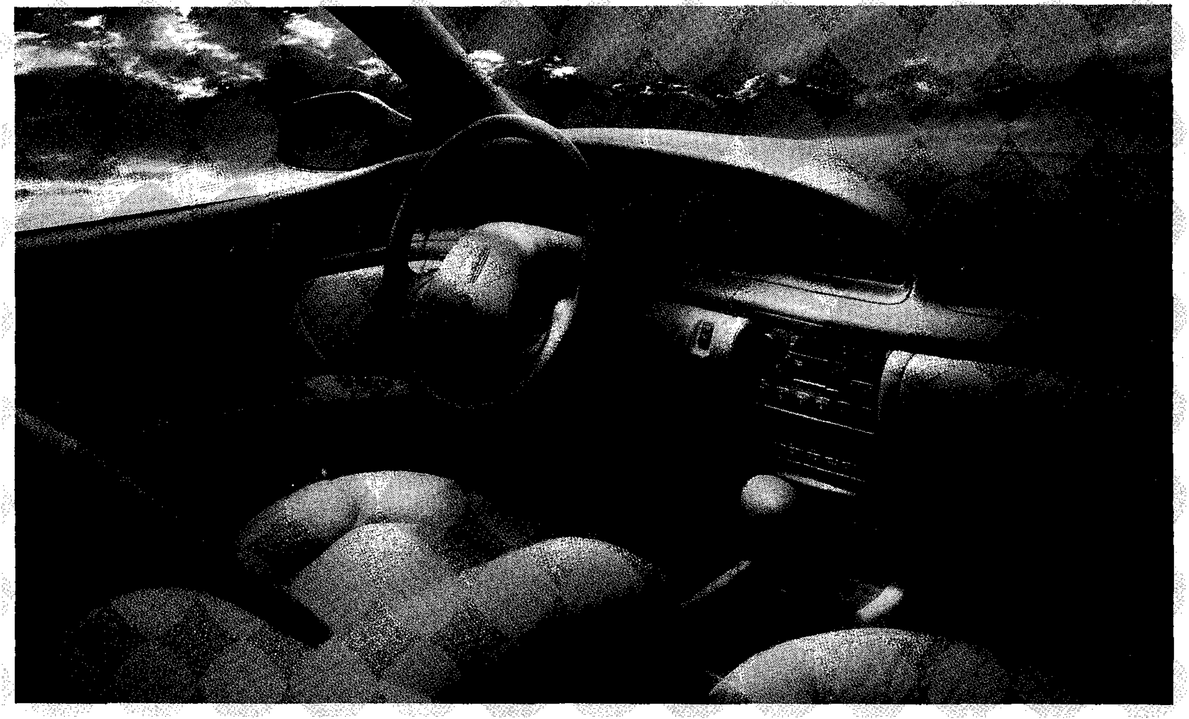
Three Sisters—Scott Elliott has assembled a dozen big and biggish names for this production of Chekhov's play, and it's as if he got lost in the stars: for the audience, the experience is one of watching actors act instead of seeing how people live. (3/10/97) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes April 6.)

Violet—A musical based on Doris Betts's story "The Ugliest Pilgrim," about a scarred woman's journey to seek the help of a TV faith healer. Music by Jeanine Tesori; book and lyrics by Brian Crawley. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 6.)

Wine-Blue-Open-Water—A modern staging of Homer's Odyssey, by the Gale Gates et al. company. (67 Broad St., 15th floor. 269-7858.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE**



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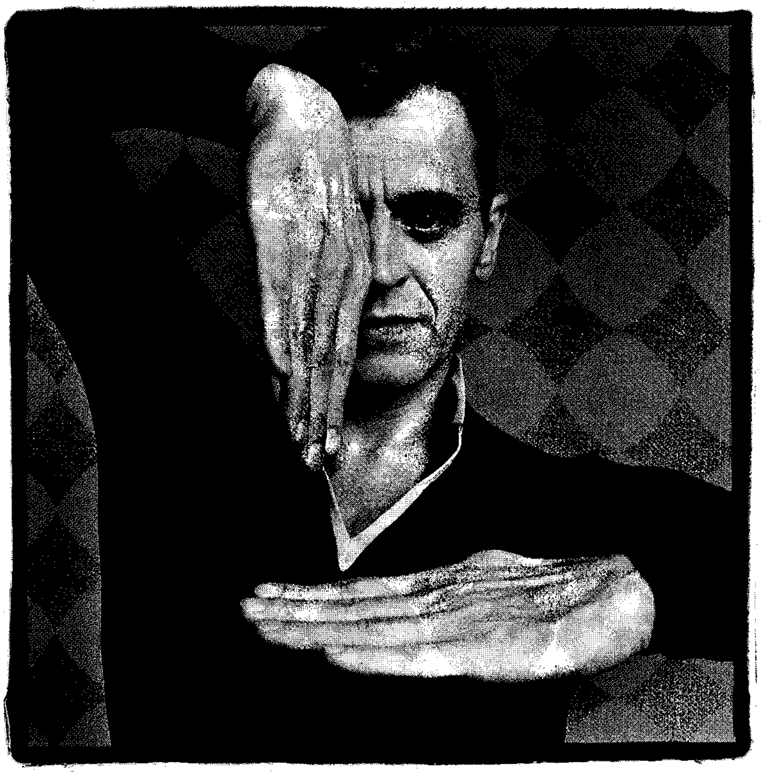

Mikhail Baryshnikov and his White Oak Project, at BAM.

FERGUS GREER

DANCE

White Oak Dance Project—After a three-year absence from New York's stages, Mikhail Baryshnikov returns with an almost entirely new troupe (the notable exceptions are the superb modern dancer Jamie Bishton and, of course, Baryshnikov himself) in two programs. Included on both are "Remote," a new piece by the up-and-coming Belgium-based choreographer Meg Stuart, and "Journey of a Poet," a re-creation and expansion of a work the late Erick Hawkins made for Baryshnikov in 1994. On March 26 and March 28, Baryshnikov takes the Merce Cunningham role in the 1953 "Septet," one of the few works Cunningham set to music (Satie's "Trois Morceaux en Forme de Poire"). On the other evenings, he dances in a piece by Dana Reitz, whom you might describe as a finicky minimalist. She calls the twenty-minute solo "a journey through several territories, where Misha is able to express different aspects of his temperament." The accompaniment is not music but light, designed, by the great Jennifer Tipton, to respond to cues Baryshnikov improvises in performance. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. March 25 at 7 and March 26-29 at 8.)

Ballet Tech—The Eliot Feld company rejuvenates itself with a new name and with eight premières to go with its six repertory works and three revivals. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 26-28 and April 1 at 8, March 29 at 2 and 8, and March 30 at noon and 4. Through April 13.)

"Sugar Tit"—Tiyé Giraud is the writer and star and Anita Gonzalez the director and choreographer of this seriocomic inquiry into the lot of slave women. The title refers to the sugared handkerchiefs that women pressed to serve as wet nurses used to pacify their own children. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. March 27-29 at 8 and March 30 at 3.)

"Investigating the Opposite"—The Florida-based choreographer Demetrius Klein pairs an introspective solo with a group work based on extroverted, even violent, extrapolations on the solo's movements and emotions. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. March 27-30 at 8:30.)

"Run Toward the Noise"—Susan Marshall presents an early version of a work in progress. The choreographer will be present to introduce and discuss the piece. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 26-27 at 8.)

Second Avenue Dance Company—Douglas Becker, Ann Carlson, Mark Morris, and Doug Varone provide the choreography for N.Y.U.'s student company—a première each from Becker and Varone, and revisions of earlier work from Carlson and Morris. (Tisch School of the Arts, 111 Second Ave., at 4th St. 998-1982. March 27-28 and March 30-31 at 8 and March 29 at 2 and 8.)

CODA—The Coalition of New York Dance Artists parcels out an evening's program between the Alpha Omega Theatrical Dance Company ("Umeus" and "Changes"), Joan Miller's Dance Players ("Earth, Wind, and Flying Things" and "Still Life"), Eleo Pomare ("Raft"), and the Rod Rodgers Dance Company ("Stance" and "Rhythm Ritual"). (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. March 27 at 8.)

Moscow Festival Ballet—Sergei Radchenko, erstwhile danseur noble, has turned a Russian talent search into a touring company stocked with veterans from the Bolshoi, the Kirov, and the Gorky and Novosibirsk State Theatres. The fifty-member troupe brings two programs: "Giselle," on March 29 at 8; and a selection of shorter works, including Petipa's "Paquita" and "Esmeralda Pas de Deux," on March 30 at 2. (Lehman College Concert Hall, the Bronx. 718-960-8833.)

Pilar Rioja—The marquesa of Spanish dance brings selections in a variety of Iberian styles, from *tablao* and *taranto* to rumba. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. March 26 at 11 A.M. and March 27-29 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Billy Taylor Trio with Ravi Coltrane—Coltrane certainly hasn't made life any easier for himself by taking up his father's instrument, the tenor saxophone. But comparisons are becoming less relevant these days as the younger Coltrane continues chiselling out his own identity. The ever-affable Billy Taylor Trio will follow the saxophonist along whatever stylistic paths he chooses to explore. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 27 at 7.)

Big Head Todd and the Monsters—Improv-laden rock, roots, and blues from a Colorado-based child of the H.O.R.D.E. clan. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 27 at 8.)

Low / Dirty Three—This Duluth trio specializes in high-impact emotion without histrionics. (A guitar solo is usually just a methodically strummed single note.) Listening to them makes you feel drugged. On last year's fine disk "The Curtain Hits the Cast," their minimalist approach spoke volumes. / A long time ago, John Cale set off thunderous squalls with his viola in the Velvet Underground; this Melbourne instrumental trio picks up where Cale left off. In concert, as on the group's captivating recent disk, "Horse Stories," the electric violin stabs the music like a matador. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. March 28 at 8.)

"1997 Boogie Woogie & Blues Piano Summit"—Swinging original Ray Bryant and boogie-woogie revivalist Alex Zwingenberger, joined by Bob Seeley and Jim Badzik. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 28 at 8.)

Judy Collins / Roberta Flack—Killing both sides of the clowns softly. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 28 at 8.)

"Jazz Piano at the Y"—These thoroughly dependable programs are by now a treasured New York institution. Dick Hyman, a pianist who never met a style he couldn't master, presides over "Boogie Woogie and the Blues," with pianists Henry Butler, Jay McShann, and Bob Seeley, clarinettist Kenny Davern, and vocalist Carrie Smith. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 29 at 8.)

Andy Statman Quartet—Statman, a clarinet and mandolin virtuoso, is an American visionary. Although he has immersed himself in Eastern European klezmer music, he's more than willing to incorporate jazz, country, and other domestic sounds into the Old World mix. For this program, though, he'll be looking strictly eastward as the ensemble performs songs from its latest recording, "Between Heaven and Earth: Music of the Jewish Mystics." (Whitman Hall, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. March 30 at 2.)

George Clinton and the P-Funk All-Stars—Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic army fused metal guitars, sci-fi silliness—who can forget the spaceship they dragged onstage?—and the heaviest funk rhythms imaginable, then set out on a mission to "rescue dance music from the blahs." Today, Clinton is something of an institution, invoked by rockers like Primus and the Red Hot Chili Peppers and sampled extensively by rappers (most notably Dr. Dre), and he's at his best in his lengthy, free-form live shows. (Roseland. March 30 at 7:30.)

Metallica—A post-metal force of nature. With Corrosion of Conformity. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. April 1 at 7.)

Folk Music of Sweden—The Nordan ensemble's interpretations of medieval Scandinavian ballads and folk songs. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 1 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**JULIE WILSON** is at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room through April 5. Dining.

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Visa's Preferred Guide to Dining

By Susan Breslow Sardone

Whether you arrive for a power lunch, a respite from shopping, pretheater sustenance, dinner à deux, or a private party, you can expect uniformly high standards, professional service, and well-prepared food from New York's finest restaurants.

This week, *The New Yorker* and Visa spotlight four favorites whose styles range from the formal to the flamboyant. When you charge a meal with your Visa® card, at these or any of our featured restaurants, you'll also be contributing to Visa's worthwhile effort to help Citymeals-on-Wheels feed the less fortunate.*

OCEANA • 55 East 54th Street • 212-759-5941 Characterizing Oceana as New York's best new seafood restaurant may not do it justice; it may be New York's best restaurant, *period.* Under the confident hand of chef Rick Moonen, dishes are an exquisite balance of flavor and seasoning with superior ingredients from around the world, such as Bay of Fundy salmon. Appetizer selection poses a difficult choice: Shall it be the grilled rouget, lobster ravioli, salmon tartare, or warm smoked trout? All are exceptional, which makes a good case for the six-course tasting menu. Entrées include an East Coast bouillabaisse, seared Chilean sea bass with lobster risotto in a saffron vinaigrette, and red snapper filet with chive whipped potatoes. Desserts are equally delectable: Apple quince napoleon, warm banana strudel, and mint chocolate crisp parfait all tempt. The upstairs Oyster Bar and Lounge is the perfect place to savor an after-dinner cigar.

OSTERIA DEL CIRCO • 120 West 55th Street • 212-265-3636 It's a circus here, all right: From the trapeze suspended above the bar to the clown sculptures arrayed over the kitchen entrance, this Adam Tihany-designed space—owned by ringmaster Sirio Maccioni, and hosted by his wife, Egidiana, and their three sons—is as colorful and whimsical as a carnival. In contrast to the playful décor, the menu is a sophisticated one. Fresh herbs and robust sauces flavor a variety of homemade pastas, pizza, fish, and vegetarian dishes. From the rotisserie, choose breast of duck, free-range chicken, or a four-course tasting menu of Egidiana's own home-cooking recipes for two. Desserts such as pineapple sorbet in an edible cappuccino cup and *bomboloncini* (a Tuscan donut) filled with raspberry or chocolate crèmes, inspire diners' own culinary acrobatics.

Osteria's playful environs belie its savvy menu.

LA RESERVE • 4 West 49th Street • 212-247-2993 An elegant choice for pretheater dining, romantic rendezvous, and celebratory repasts, La Reserve reminds diners of how satisfying a traditional French restaurant can be. In a spacious, flower-filled room with upholstered banquettes, etched mirrors, and crystal chandeliers, patrons are treated to chef Dominique Payraudeau's haute cuisine. Appetizers such as house-smoked salmon with watercress mousse and a terrine of smoked game are in his repertoire. Prix-fixe entrées include roast duck with chocolate and kumquat sauce; grilled red snapper with tomatoes, capers, and olives; and beef sirloin. Commit early to a classic dessert soufflé in flavors such as frozen Lillet or warm pistachio.

Dining haute at La Reserve.

I TRULLI • 122 East 27th Street • 212-481-7372 I Trulli is responsible for introducing New Yorkers to the authentic tastes of Apulia, a region in southern Italy at the "heel of the boot." Its two rustic-style dining areas are separated by a glass-enclosed fireplace. The front cantina is made even cozier thanks to a wood-burning oven and rotisserie that yield crisp, tasty roasted game, meat, and whole fish entrées. Chef Carlo Benavides accents fresh vegetables, handmade pasta, and house specials to create light, low-fat selections. Start with a baby artichoke and mushroom casserole, baked oysters, or the creamy fennel and arugula soup. In May, the sun-dappled courtyard garden, one of the city's loveliest, opens.

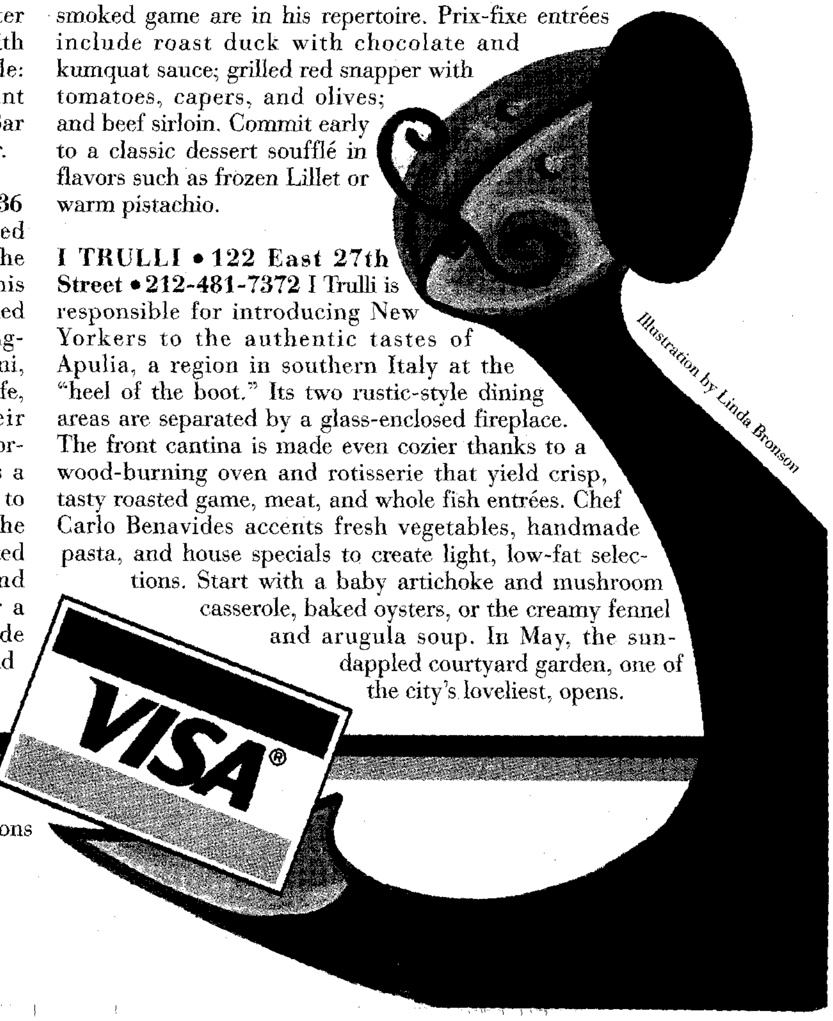

Illustration by Linda Bronson

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Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs. The **DON BRADEN** quartet is in on March 26. You'd never know it from his unremarkable recordings, but Braden has the makings of a tenor-saxophone contender. Live, he's a ripsnorter who combines youthful exuberance and a thorough knowledge that honors the masters without kowtowing to them. **DAVÍD SANCHEZ** (March 27-29) is another budding tenor titan, whose aces are his Latin idioms. Others play across the white-water rapids of their rhythmic currents; Sanchez plays within them. Trumpeter **MICHAEL PHILLIP MOSSMAN** (March 30) has been a dependable presence for more than a decade now; checkups on his progress are always in order. March 31: The **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA.** Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 30: The **PAQUITO D'RIVERA** quintet and the **DAVE VALENTIN** quintet. March 31-April 2: **CHICK COREA** and friends. Corea and an all-star roster—drummer **ROY HAYNES,** bassist **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE,** alto saxophonist **KENNY GARRETT,** and trumpeter **WALLACE RONEY**—will presumably continue their salute to the music of the bop-piano giant who is the subject of their latest recording, "Remembering Bud Powell." With revisions of Powell's work that border on the subversive, this band isn't about to let reverence get in the way of improvisation. Come early, and bring your own oxygen supply. Dining.

Café Pierre, 2 E. 61st St. (940-8185)—Vocalist-pianist **KATHLEEN LANDIS** performs the music of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and **BARBARA COOK,** accompanied by **WALLY HARPER,** her longtime pianist and arranger, in a tribute to Oscar Hammerstein II. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Gershwin Hotel, 7 E. 27th St. (246-3102)—"Jazz Nites," each one consisting of a featured act followed by an all-night jam session, for just ten bucks. Sound familiar? Going Smalls one better, the Gershwin throws in a jazz film or video, too. **JASON LINDNER** and his band are in on March 29.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Contemporary jazz singing has its doyenne (Betty Carter) and its rebel (Cassandra Wilson), but whether **NNENNA FREELON** (through March 30) will inhabit the currently unfilled sleek-stylist spot is still an open question. Starting April 1: The **TOM SCOTT** quartet. Mondays belong to national treasure **LES PAUL.** Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. **BILL MAYS** (piano) and **STEVE GILMORE** (bass) are in through March 29.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 1: Vibist **MIKE MANIERI,** too often a friend of fusion, has been leaning increasingly to the left over the past few years; wild-man drummer **FRANKLIN KIERMYER** frequently equates intensity with ingenuity.

Maxim's, 680 Madison Ave., at 61st St. (751-5111)—A mock-nineteenth-century bistro with stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. Hot young tenor **TOM ANDERSEN** makes the place swoon on March 27-29. Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Chameleonic soprano **KT SULLIVAN** is in for a three-week stay, with her tribute "Ladies of the Silver Screen." . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Sardi's, 234 W. 44th St. (221-8444)—March 27-29: **MARY CLEERE HARAN** in "An Affair to Remember," a story-and-song evening of movie music from the fifties.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—March 27: A sure and skillful bassist, **DWAYNE BURNO** has played with enough heavyweights to figure out how to lead his own quintet. Cobb's Mob (March 28-29) features drummer **JIMMY COBB,** the sole surviving member of Miles Davis's "Kind of Blue" recording band; with feisty guitarist **PETER BERNSTEIN** and keyboardist **MICHAEL WEISS** onboard, don't expect a similar chamber-music ambience. April 1: A bassist with a resonant, fingers-in-the-wood tone and a rhythmic spin that calls to mind the great Wilbur Ware, **OMER AVITAL** gathers around himself some of the brightest of the new jazz mavericks. Stocked to the gills with exciting new players, the **JASON LINDNER BIG BAND** now holds court every Monday.

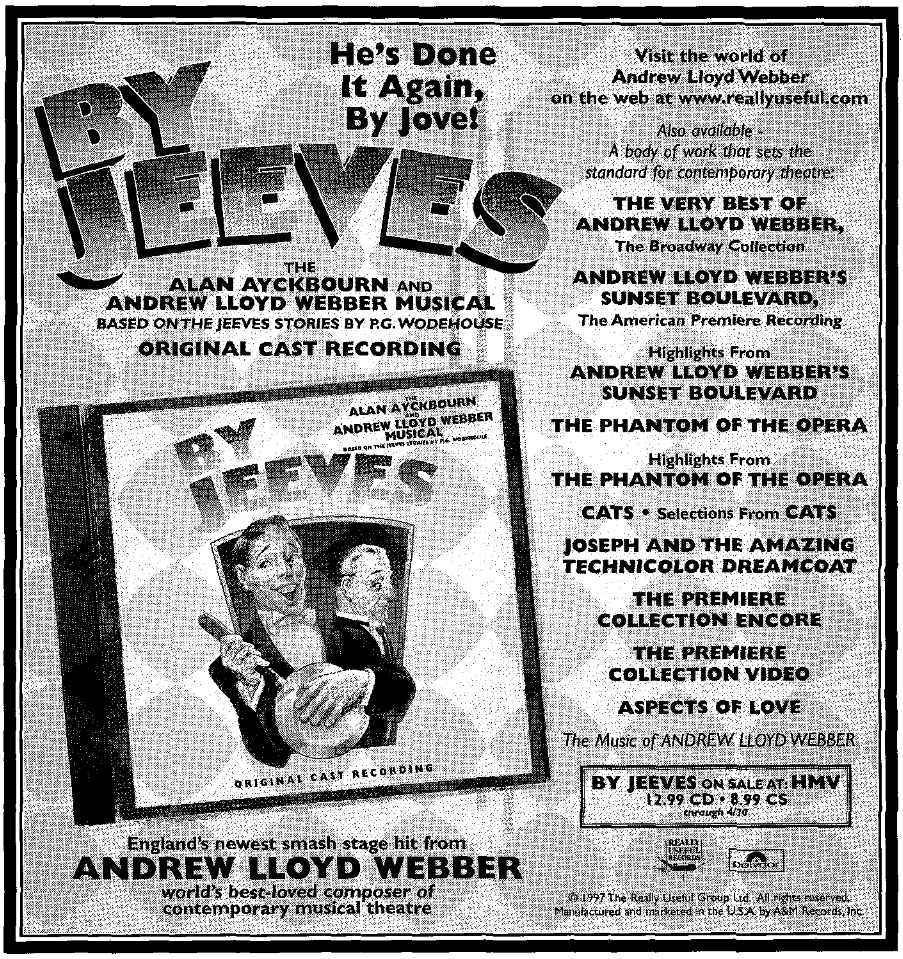
ONLY CONNECT

Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov)—Visiting the Library of Congress's Web site is a lot like visiting the library itself: daunting if you don't know what you're looking for, but full of happy surprises. The actual library—which contains more than sixteen million books and a hundred million other items, from maps to movies, Broadway scripts to Stradivari violins—is not on-line, though much of its catalogue is available here. In addition, you can call up the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, and other historical documents, not to mention civics lessons such as "How Our Laws Are Made," by House parliamentarian Charles W. Johnson. Congress watchers will appreciate a section called Thomas, which presents information on bills currently under consideration, organized by topic, author, and popular title (e.g., the "balanced budget" amendment).

If all of this sounds like virtual C-SPAN, turn to the American Memory Page, where a collection of photographs and illustrations of past Presidents (Andrew Jackson beside his horse; Abraham Lincoln reading to his son) and First Ladies is on view. Or browse the enlightening exhibition titled "The Russian Church and Native Alaskan Cultures," where you learn that missionary priests used to adopt native children to serve as interpreters, and that shamans (photographed in full animistic regalia) competed with Christians for American souls well into the twentieth century. A final highlight is a collection of memorabilia from vaudeville and ethnic theatre. You can hear early Edison recordings (in RealAudio or Wav) of "Desperate Desmond" by Frank Duprez (without whom there would have been no Spike Jones), as well as of the mimetically adept Orren and Drew, a vaudeville team that, using only their voices, imitates a sawmill, an orchestra tuning up, and five dogs in an argument: not so far from Congress after all.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through March 30: **MICHELE ROSEWOMAN AND QUINTESSENCE.** Pianist and composer Rosewoman treads no stylistic path but her own. Her unclassifiable compositions combine darting tropical rhythms with fervent soloing, not infrequently from the composer herself. Starting April 1: The **BENNY GOLSON** quartet. Dining.

Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—**MANHATTAN BLUES FOUR** (through March 29)



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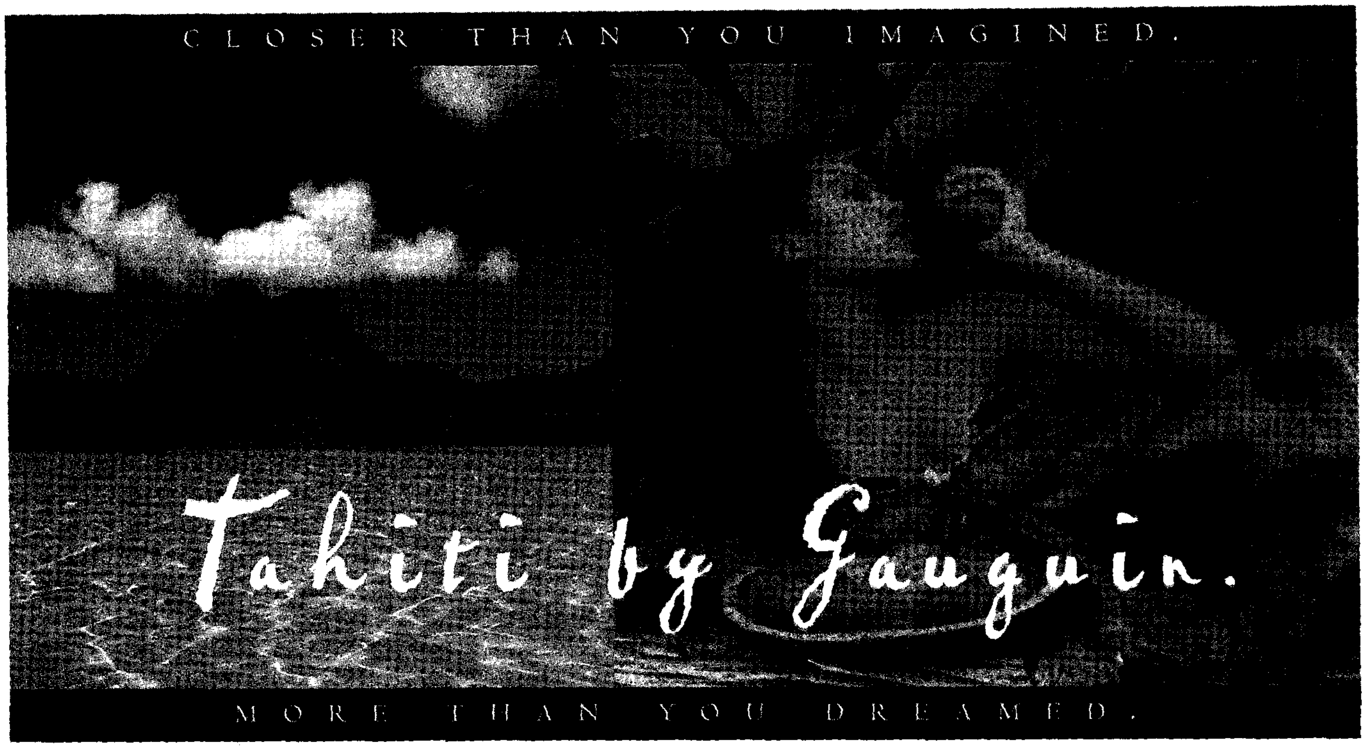
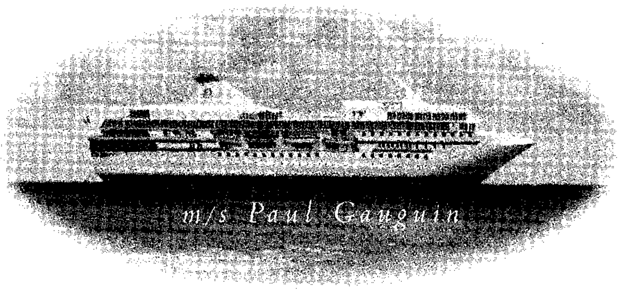


Just seven and a half hours from Los Angeles are tiny worlds so breathtaking that even the word paradise seems inadequate. Welcome to the islands of Tahiti aboard the new m/s Paul Gauguin, named after the artist who painted an enduring vision of Tahiti on the soul of our planet. ❦ *Starting in January of 1998, the 320-guest Paul Gauguin will allow you to explore the beautiful islands of Rangiroa, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Moorea and Tahiti. Our seven-night cruises feature all outside view staterooms (50% with private balconies) and one of the world's highest space-to-guest ratios. Superb cuisine inspired by a Michelin-starred chef. And activities that include a marine watersports platform and a world-famous French spa. Everywhere you will find sophistication marked by a unique French accent.* ❦ *The Paul Gauguin will be launched in the six-star tradition of Radisson Seven Seas Cruises. And like the other ships in the fleet — the ssc Radisson Diamond, the m/s Song of Flower, the m/s Hanseatic and the m/s Bremen — she will take you to worlds beyond imagination.*



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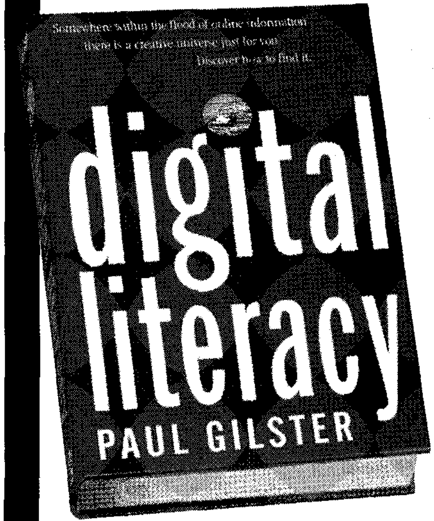
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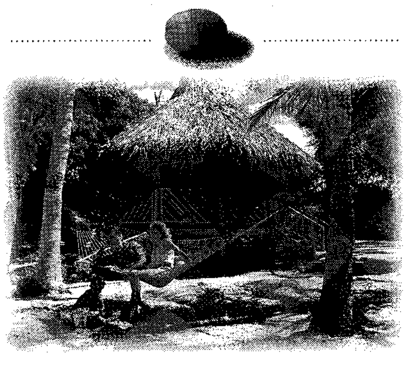

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AT HISTORIC KA'UPULEHU

THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAI'I

features Houston Person, Bernard Purdie, Herman Foster, and Jay Leonhart. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 30: Try this for a parlor game: name two jazz artists of the past four decades that bassist **BUSTER WILLIAMS** hasn't played with. Good luck. The ubiquitous virtuoso will have pianist **GERI ALLEN** on hand to help generate sparks. From April 1: The **ROY HARGROVE** quintet. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—West Coast drummer **JERRY GRANELLI** (March 26-27) has been turning out recordings so all-inclusive that they just don't fit within the prescribed boundaries of contemporary jazz. More power to him. March 28-29: **RENEE MANNING'S BLUES EXPLOSION.** From April 1: **THE TRIO,** with soprano saxophonist **DAVE LIEBMAN.**

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. Through March 29: **HILTON RUIZ** (piano) and **ANDY MC CLOUD** (bass). Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—March 27: Celtic pop with **SUSAN MC KEOWN AND THE CHANTING HOUSE.** With Lucy Kaplansky. March 28: The bittersweet excellence of **KENNY RANKIN.** March 29: **BUSTER POINDEXTER AND HIS BANSHEES OF BLUE.**

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—March 28: The **FRANK & WALTERS** bring their keen, feel-good pop in from their home shores of Cork. March 29: The delightfully named **SLY AND THE FAMILY STALLONE.** March 30: Chapel Hill alternalegends **PIPE,** whose record label is Jesus Christ. March 31: Topnotch indie pop with Matador recording artists **SPOON** and **ZUMPANO.** April 1: Transplanted British guitarist **FRANCIS DUNNERY** has employed a novel setup during his recent "residencies" at small clubs: acoustic guitar and laptop—the better to remember freshly written lyrics with.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—March 27: **LITTLE SAMMY DAVIS.** March 28: From the musical world of David Letterman: **HIRAM BULLOCK** and **WILL LEE.** March 29: **JAMES COTTON,** one of the handful of world-class blues harmonica players.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district. March 27: **CAMBER.** March 31: Playing separate gigs, local guitar hero **MARC RIBOT** and free-jazz and downtown-rock drummer **WILLIAM HOOKER.**

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—March 28: Beat Positive, Voodoo Martini, and Everlounge stir up cocktail sounds. Tattooed East Village folk star **DANIEL CARTIER** (March 29) evokes Gen X ennui with the sweetest tenor (Irish or not) we've heard in a while. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—**ZAP MAMA** (March 29), founded by the Belgian-Zairean singer Marie Daulne, is a multi-ethnic vocal quintet (predominantly a-cappella, although they've recently increased their use of percussion) that employs a variety of languages and styles (French, Spanish, Pygmy chants, and Syrian pop, among others) to create densely textured melodies and rhythmic polyrhythms.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 26-27: **JOHN CALE.** March 28: **NADA SURF,** an above-average alternative-rock combo that had a minor hit with "Popular," headlines a bill that also features the pride of Secaucus, the **WRENS,** as well as the **CANDY BUTCHERS** and **DITCH CROAKER.** March 29: The reliable **JOHN ZORN** performs with Philippine drummer **SUSIE IBARRA.** March 30: The **COMPOSER SERIES,** modern chamber music performed by the **FLUX QUARTET**—Thomas Chiu, Cornelius Dufallo, Kenji Bunch, and David Eggar. March 31: **VERNON REID'S MY SCIENCE PROJECT.**

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Lap-steel master **SONNY RHODES** slides in on March 26. March 27-28: The Blues Brothers made him a frat-household name, but **MATT (GUITAR) MURPHY** got his start way back in the fifties, as a guitarist in the bands of Howlin' Wolf and Memphis Slim.

KAREN CALDICOTT

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—March 27: Rustic, acoustic Plains rock from **LULLABY FOR THE WORKING CLASS,** out of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 26: **LULLABY FOR THE WORKING CLASS.** (see Maxwell's.) March 27: **JOHN S. HALL,** who overindulges his urge for spoken-word mayhem. March 28: Salty former Dream Syndicate front man **STEVE WYNN** and articulate narrative spinner **PETER BLEGVAD.** March 29: The excellent duo **SEPTEMBER 67,** made up of Shannon Worrell and Kristin Asbury.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. March 28: **SISTER CAROL** and her now traditional Good Friday show. March 29: **KATENDE,** a Brazilian samba show that doesn't want for verve. March 31: Thirty-plus years of salsa have perfectly seasoned **EL GRAN COMBO.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—March 27: Up-and-coming folkie **PATTI ROTHBERG.** With **MATCHBOX 20.** March 29: Having recently distinguished himself by exposing his genitals on "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" (he was wearing a kilt but no underwear), **ASHLEY MAC ISAAC** is still best known for inspired, fiddle-driven pop.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—March 27: The **STRANGLERS,** those legendary men in black whose punk was once so ahead of the curve (they formed in 1974) that people either walked out of their gigs or picked a fight with them. March 29: Groovy jam combo **STRANGEFOLK,** from Burlington, Vermont. The **GORDON STONE** trio indulges in some bluegrass (the music, we're sure) downstairs.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. The array of lenders attests to an amazing feat of museology. In one particularly poignant juxtaposition, two frescoes of saints and angels from Damascus hang next to a similar piece from Jerusalem: the Met, at least, has succeeded in bringing Syria and Israel together. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "Giambattista Tiepolo." This ravishing assembly strongly suggests that the eighteenth-century Venetian master, a pivot between the baroque and the rococo, is due for a fin-de-siècle reëvaluation. Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In an age of digital art, the humble collage can seem deceptively tame. Yet "The Photomontages of Hannah Höch" proves that the artist's imagination needs nothing more than scissors and a pot of glue—and stacks of newspapers and magazines. Through May 20. . . . ¶ "Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, the 1980s." Forty examples from the Abstract Expressionist's final working decade. Through April 29. (For more de Kooning, see Galleries—Uptown.) . . . ¶ "Manuel Alvarez Bravo." The great Mexican photographer's career spans eight decades; this retrospective visits all of them and includes rare platinum prints he made in the sixties from earlier negatives. The earliest works alternate between elegant abstractions and intensely emotional reportage; a photograph from 1934 shows a beautiful young striker moments after his assassination, the blood still pouring from his head. In 1938, Bravo met André Breton and began dabbling in Surrealism; in one of his most famous works, "The Good Reputation Sleeping," a nude woman with bandaged thighs slumbers amid tiny cacti. Through May 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-century artists. Through June 1. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Art/Fashion" presents garments designed by visual artists and other piecework. Through June 8. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Biennial is in full swing, with seventy artists this time out, old hands (Louise Bourgeois, Bruce Nauman, Ed Ruscha) and new (Michael Ashkin, Zoe Beloff, Martin Kersels, Katy Schimert). (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk," an exhibition devoted to vanishing and extinct species, includes a diorama of an Everglades gator hole, a VW bug covered with zebra mussels, animal *objets* (cobra boots, baleen corsets, a rhino-foot ashtray), and a few representatives—a Madagascar radiated tortoise, baby alligators, cichlids—from the Bronx Zoo's Species Survival Plan. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

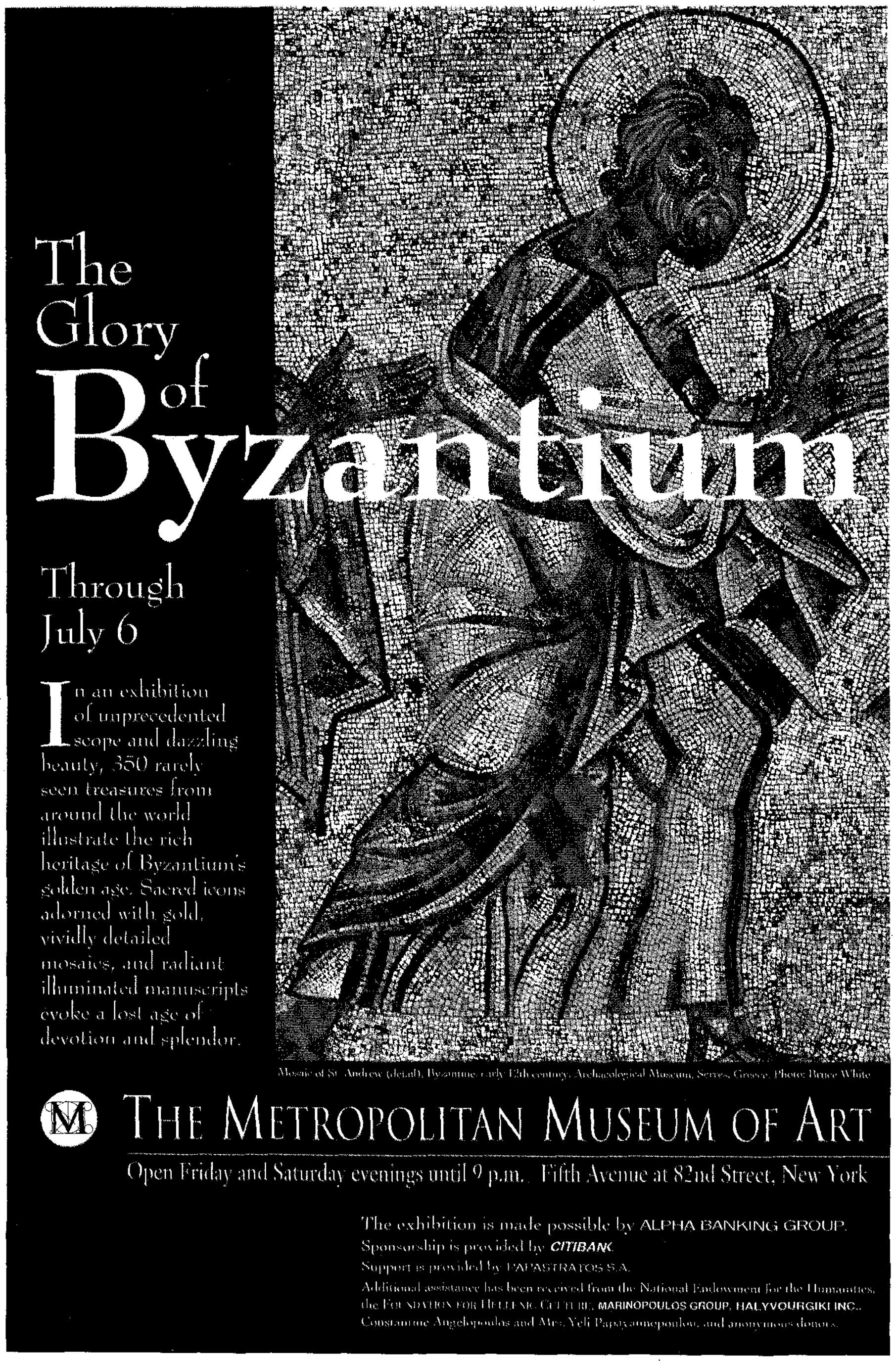
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt" presents amulets, jewelry, statues, painted mummy cases, and other objects, everyday and sacred. Through May 18. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—"Beatrice Wood: A Centennial Tribute" celebrates Wood's second career, as a ceramist. The San Francisco native, who turned a hundred and four earlier this month, was part of the New York Dada circle in the teens, exhibiting her paintings alongside those of Duchamp, Man Ray, and Picabia. A few of her works from that era may be seen here, but this exhibition concentrates on the iridescent gold- and copper-glazed vessels that have been her signature since she took up the craft, at forty, in 1933. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St. (744-8181)—"Adornment and Eternity: Status and Rank in Chinese Ornament" is a well chosen, informatively mounted exhibition that demonstrates how, throughout China's history, the hat (or comb, or embroidery) really did proclaim the man. From the Tang dynasty on, a gold belt hook announced that the wearer was at least of the fourth imperial rank, as explicitly as a gold oak leaf on the collar now identifies a U.S. Army major. Through June 28. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (860-6894)—The products designed by Henry Dreyfuss (1904-72) were once so pervasive as to be nearly invisible: the Round thermostat, the TouchTone and Princess telephones, the Hoover vacuum cleaner with the streamlined locomotive sweep light. The museum has collected drawings, models, prototypes, and products sure to evoke longings you thought you had outgrown—for Polaroid Swingers, perhaps, or red John Deere Model L tractors. Through Aug. 31. . . . ¶ "*Disegno*: Italian Renaissance Designs for Decorative Arts." Through May 18. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St. (977-7170)—"Henry Darger: The Unreality of Being" is a retrospective de-



The Glory of Byzantium

Through July 6

In an exhibition of unprecedented scope and dazzling beauty, 350 rarely seen treasures from around the world illustrate the rich heritage of Byzantium's golden age. Sacred icons adorned with gold, vividly detailed mosaics, and radiant illuminated manuscripts evoke a lost age of devotion and splendor.

Mosaic of St. Andrew (detail), Byzantine, early 13th century, Archaeological Museum, Serres, Greece. Photo: Bruce White

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Open Friday and Saturday evenings until 9 p.m. Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, New York

The exhibition is made possible by ALPHA BANKING GROUP.
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voted to watercolors and pencil drawings (apparently the outcome of the artist's childhood in orphanages and an asylum for the feebleminded) of virtuous girls threatened by villainous adults. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

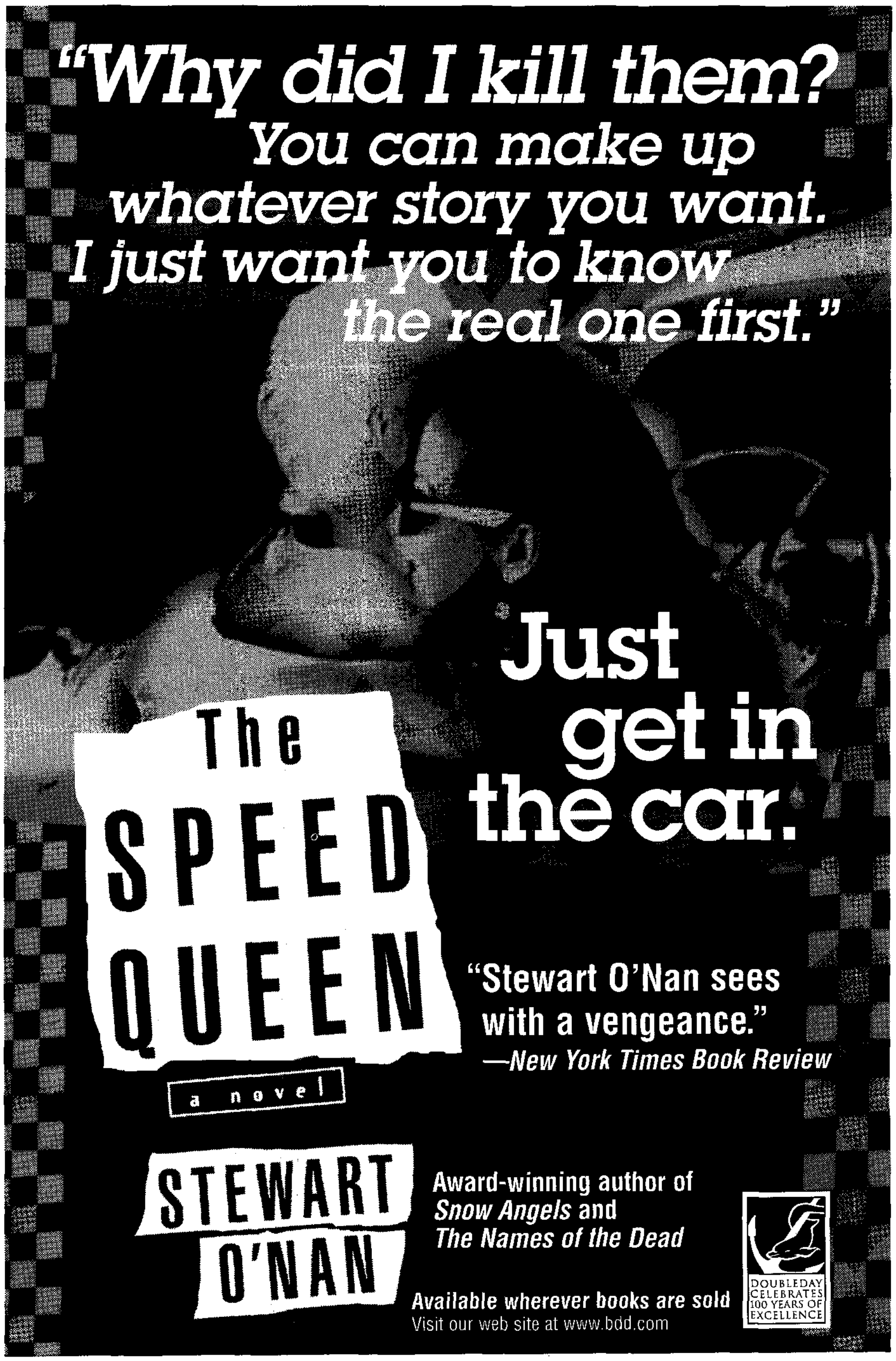
The New Museum, 583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (219-1222)—Conceptual art that gives you something to look at. (What a concept!) Since 1983, the Chilean artist Eugenio Dittborn has been using the international mails to distribute his paintings; in the beginning it was a way of circumventing the restrictive Pinochet regime, but it has become an integral part of his politically charged (though not preachy) art. He paints, prints, and sews his images onto flimsy canvas squares, which the recipient then reassembles; after they have been exhibited, they are mailed to the next place. The envelopes that carried the works are exhibited next to them, giving the show a truly global scale. Through April 13. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6; Saturday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 6.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Let There Be Light: William Tyndale and the Making of the English Bible" assembles artifacts—including both known copies of his 1526 edition of the New Testament—that chronicle the life and surprising demise of this translator, who was burned at the stake as a heretic for his efforts. Gottesman Exhibition Hall; through May 17. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Adele Alsop—This Utah landscape artist loads on paint in creamy, colorful rivers that brim with light. There's a cheerful, cartoonlike sensibility behind the images, though not much more is going on than meets the eye. Through March 29. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122.)



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Willem de Kooning (1904-97)—"Paintings 1983-1984," a fine pendant to the current MOMA exhibition. This is a show for lovers of the late artist, whether they wholeheartedly embrace these paintings or, just as likely, have reservations about their quality. The uncertainty about the status of the work within de Kooning's œuvre and the issues of connoisseurship that it raises are precisely what make it interesting. Through March 29. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 243-0200.)

Yvonne Jacquette—Dizzying aerial views of countryside and cities, mostly nocturnes, painted in a sharply observed, un-ironic style with a limited but sparkling palette. Sometimes the effect is prying, as in a New York rooftop scene in which the painter peers into skylights, but more often it's uplifting, in a curiously old-fashioned way—the big canvases of midtown Manhattan skyscrapers have all the powerful optimism of such obvious antecedents as Joseph Stella and Georgia O'Keeffe. Through March 29. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

Alice Neel (1900-84)—"Paintings from the Thirties," an extraordinary show of early works from a period when the artist was still experimenting with various styles. Her characteristically precise yet sympathetic observation is abundantly evident in several of the portraits. At the same time, she borrows freely, and often successfully, from social realism, Expressionism, and Surrealism. "Movie Lobby" (1932) is decidedly uncharacteristic, yet its brilliant pinks and its spatial exaggeration are wonderful; it's reminiscent of Florine Stettheimer's work, though it would be a stretch to find a figure further removed from Neel's world than the wealthy doyenne of the New York Dada scene. The most extraordinary image must be the famous nude portrait of Joe Gould, impressively endowed with three penises. Through April 12. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933)—An exquisite selection of works demonstrating that the great American glass artist was more of a revolutionary than most people think. The familiar fruit-and-flower lampshades are as glorious as ever; a series of gracefully composed vases in iridescent pastels are far ahead of their time. In two windows representing the seasons, several panes are overlaid to create a deep sense of space and rich—at times almost funky—coloristic effects. Through April 26. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**Georg Baselitz**, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays; through May 17. . . . **Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol**, Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through April 26. . . . **Joe Brainard**, De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through April 19. . . . **Alan Davie**, ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through April 5. . . . **Niki de Saint Phalle**, Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858. Through April 19. . . . **Janet Gillespie**, Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through April 19. . . . **Bryan Hunt**, Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through April 21. . . . **Bill Jacklin**, Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through April 5. . . . **Jeff Joyce**, Winston Wächter, 111 E. 65th St. 327-2526. Through April 12. . . . **Käthe Kollwitz** and **Lea Grundig**, Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734. Through May 31. . . . **Mary Petty**, Syracuse University Lubin House, 11 E. 61st St. 826-0320. Through April 28. . . . **Ellen Phelan**, Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through April 19. . . . **Richard Stankiewicz**, Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through May 3. . . . **James Valerio**, Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through March 29. . . . **Tabitha Vevers**, Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through April 19.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Robert Gober—Works on paper and small sculptures featuring many of the artist's signature motifs: distorted sinks and cribs, sticks of butter, anatomical displacements (e.g., a leg protruding from a vagina). As in the work of Andres Serrano (see Photography), the recurrent themes are sexuality and transgression, but Gober works through indirection and metaphor rather than nuts-and-bolts depiction. Through April 12. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

Ilya Kabakov—For "The Life of Flies," an impressive multipart installation by the Russian artist (who now makes his home in New York), the Gladstone gallery has been transformed into something like the gloomy, decrepit provincial museums of the former Soviet Union. Through April 5. (515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Group Show—An inaugural exhibition whose wildly theatrical centerpiece is Louise Bourgeois's enormous walk-through steel "Spider" (1996). The gallery has also assembled Jenny Holzer's early "Living Series" (1980-82), metal plaques embossed with often sardonic texts in red and black. Alice Neel's portrait of a smiling Bella Abzug, her arms extended in welcome, hangs over the desk. Through April 5. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List—**DOUG AITKEN,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through April 26. . . . **DON BONHAM,** Two Sculptors, Inc., 124 W. 18th St. 645-3584. Through April 19. . . . **LINDA BURNHAM,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through April 20. . . . **FERNANDO CANOVAS,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through April 2. . . . **RACHEL HARRISON,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through April 20. . . . **MAXINE HENRYSON AND HUNTER REYNOLDS,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through April 13. . . . **ARCHIE RAND,** Baldacci, 521 W. 21st St. 463-0919. Through April 12. . . . **JOIE ROSEN** and **MICHAEL RUBENSTEIN,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Both shows through March 30. . . . **ROBIN TEWES,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through March 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Carl Andre—A selection of mostly large-scale works from the Guggenheim Museum's Panza Collection and a few recent small-scale ones executed this year, by one of the century's most remarkable sculptors. While the word "minimalist" telegraphs visual astringency, Andre's sculptures are marvellously sensuous. Through March 29. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

Callum Innes—Who says abstraction is dead? Chances are, anyone who sees this Scottish artist's derivative show. Through April 12. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

Elizabeth Peyton—New paintings by a young artist who favors images of rock stars, royalty, and her friends, which, in standard postmodern fashion, she draws from photographs. Her technique, though, is nothing if not painterly, with colors so rich and lambent that the pictures seem to glow from within. Among the stars here: Liam and Noel Gallagher, of the British band Oasis; the young Elvis Presley beside Gladys, the mother he adored; and the alternative star Beck, whose three-quarter-length portrait is the largest image in a show of predominantly small works. Not to be missed. Through April 12. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 558 Broome St. 431-1512. Closed Tuesdays.)

Group Show—Oshin Saginian's monotypes are the strongest work here: working simply with a brayer and printing ink, he has created a series of eerie, quasi-representational images, evocative at once of early photography and microscopy, which seem to offer glimpses of an incomprehensible, prehuman (or is it posthuman?) world. The Pakistani artist Shahzia Sikander contributes a suite of brilliantly colored drawings, delicately executed in vegetable dyes, watercolor, dry pigment, and tea stains, which mimic the forms of Persian miniatures as they examine issues of gender and national identity. Through March 29. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**L. C. ARMSTRONG,** Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. 966-2676. Through April 10. . . . **SKIP ARNOLD,** Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455. Through April 19. . . . **JAN BARACZ,** Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. 477-5271. Through April 3. . . . **RON BARON,** Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through April 12. . . . **ENZO CUCCHI,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through April 19. . . . **MARK GREENWOLD,** Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through April 15. . . . **DAN GRIGGS,** Cacciola, 125 Wooster St. 966-9177. Through April 19. . . . **KARL MANN,** Ricco/Maresca, 152

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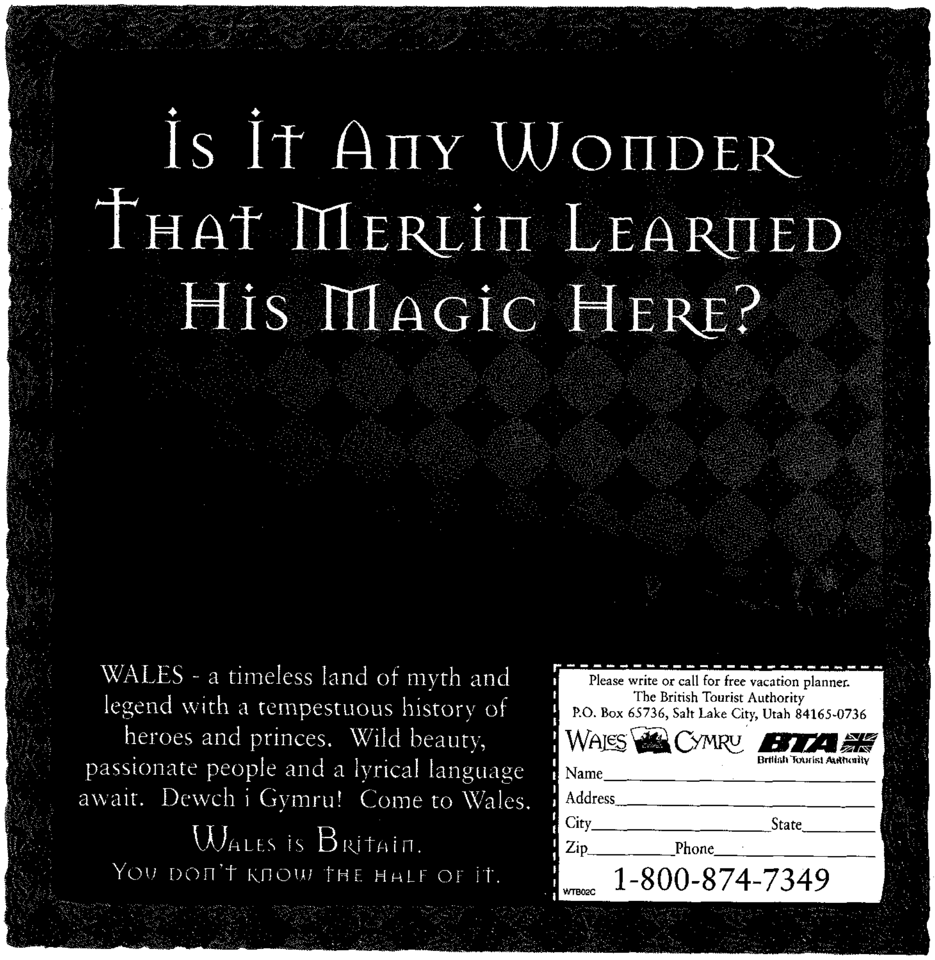

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Wooster St. 780-0071. Through April 12. . . . **JOE NICASTRI,** Fotouhi Cramer, 560 Broadway. 431-1304. Through April 10. . . . **ROXY PAINE,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through April 26. . . . **JASON RHOADES,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through April 26. . . . **MIRIAM SCHAPIRO,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through April 26. . . . **MICHAEL SMITH AND JOSHUA WHITE,** Wittels, 48 Greene St. 219-2211. Through April 5. . . . **KEITH SONNIER,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160. Through April 26. . . . **FRANK STELLA,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through April 26.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

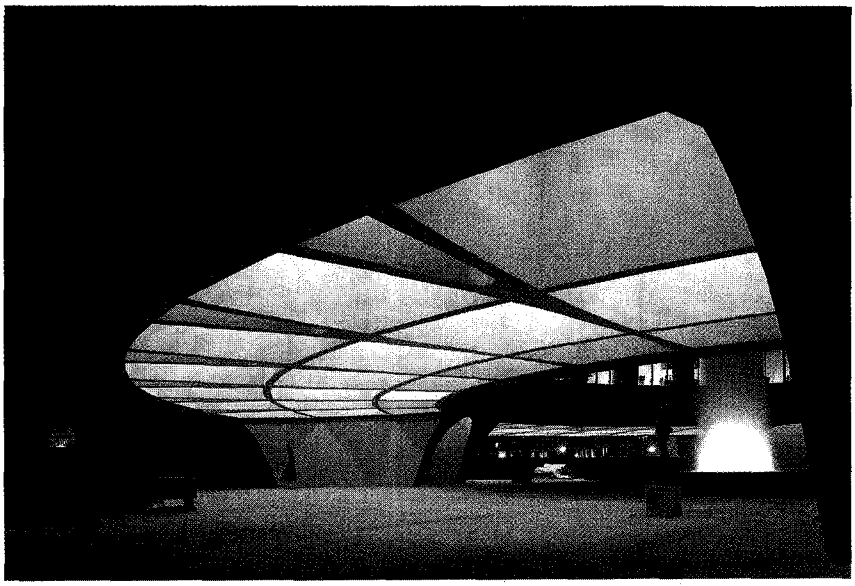
SOTHEBY'S—March 26: Continental furniture, including many items from the collection of William Randolph Hearst, Jr. . . . ¶ March 27: An arcade auction of modestly priced furniture and decorative art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S—March 26: An auction of stamps. . . . ¶ March 27: Continental furniture. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** American paintings. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400. March 27.)

INTERNATIONAL ASIAN ART FAIR—The show concludes on March 26. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Tickets at the door. For information, call 642-8572.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

SAUL LEITER—Muted color views, mostly of New York in the nineteen-fifties, by one of our foremost black-and-white photographers. The nearly washed-out palette takes getting used to, but the images—snowy streets, a languid nude woman asleep on a porch—soon begin to glow with a painterly confidence. Through April 5. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)



"Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C." (1974), one of Ezra Stoller's architectural photographs (Danziger).

ESKO MÄNNIKKÖ—"Mexas," an installation of photographs of South Texas desert residents by a Finnish artist who first attracted attention with richly idiosyncratic images of Finnish bachelors and their ramshackle abodes. He avoids the clichés of documentary photography, preferring the straightforwardness of color to the romanticizing halo that black-and-white inevitably confers. Through March 30. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

JOE MARVULLO / SID KAPLAN—Geometric color images made over the past ten years. / "New York in the Fifties," a small exhibit of black-and-white images by a master printer who has done work for the Capas, Robert Frank, Allen Ginsberg, and Weegee. Both shows through April 5. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

ANDRES SERRANO—"A History of Sex." New photographs: a bound-and-gagged priest, a dwarf spread-eagled on her back, a woman with a strap-on dildo, a pre-op transsexual, a woman masturbating a horse. Someone should send Howard Stern to review this show. Through April 12. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

EZRA STOLLER / WEEGEE (1899-1968)—Crystal-clear, highly satisfying views of architectural landmarks designed by Wright, Saarinen, Johnson, Mies van der Rohe, Breuer, Kahn, and others. / Classic photojournalism. Both shows through April 12. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. 226-0056.)

"BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, U.S.A."—A salon-style presentation of more than seventy works from the turn of the century to the present, by such disparate artists as Nat Fein, Vincent Cianni, Benn Mitchell, Louis Stettner, Kim Iacono, Berenice Abbott, and William Klein. Through May 3. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust," Jeffrey A. Wolin's images of survivors with handwritten texts on the surfaces of the prints. Through April 20. . . . ¶ "War Story," an installation by Mikael Levin. Through April 20. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

SHORT LIST—**MICHAEL ACKERMAN,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 1 to 7; through April 27. . . . **MANUEL ALVAREZ BRAVO,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Also at Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Both shows through May 3. . . . **LOIS CONNER,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Through April 19. . . . **WILLIAM EGGLESTON,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through April 12. . . . **MICHAEL KENNA,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through April 26. . . . **O. WINSTON LINK,** McEnroe, 41 Greene St. 219-0395. Through April 19. . . . **MARIA MARTINEZ-CANAS,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through March 29. . . . **ANDREA MODICA,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through April 19. . . . **BARBARA MORGAN,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through April 5. . . . **ALISON ROSSITER,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Opens at noon; through April 13. . . . **DAVID SELTZER,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through March 29. . . . **FREDERICK SOMMER** and **JIM DINE,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through April 5. . . . **OLIVER WASOW,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through March 29. . . . **JAMES WELLING,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480. Through March 29.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

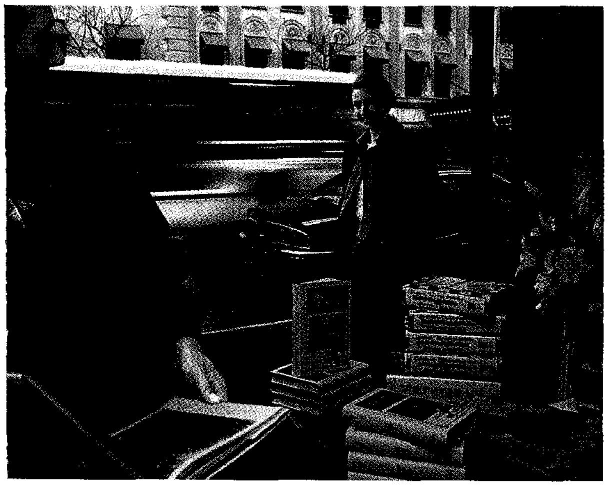
METROPOLITAN OPERA—**DAS RHEINGOLD,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Hanna Schwarz, Birgitta Svendén, Graham Clark, and James Morris; conducted by James Levine. (March 26 at 8 and March 29 at 2.) . . . **EUGENE ONEGIN,** in a new production, with Marina Shaguch, Marianna Tarassova, Vladimir Chernov, Neil Shicoff, and Paul Plishka; Antonio Pappano. (March 27 at 8.) . . . With Galina Gorchakova instead of Ms. Shaguch and Clifton Forbis instead of Mr. Shicoff. (April 1 at 8.) . . . **AIDA,** with Carolyn James, Barbara Dever, Michael Sylvester, and Frederick Burchinal; Adam Fischer. (March 28 at 8.) . . . **FAUST,** with Renée Fleming, Richard Leech, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, and Samuel Ramey; Julius Rudel. (March 29 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY,** with Michele Crider, Franco Farina, and Alan Opie; John Fiore. (March 31 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

LISTENING BOOTH

GEORGE CRUMB'S "QUEST"—Even by Crumbian standards, the chamber work "Quest" was slow to develop. David Starobin, who not only produced this recording (on the Bridge label) but also performs the intricate guitar parts, traces its origin to 1971, when he begged the composer for a guitar-centered work; and twenty-five years later (following several work-in-progress unveilings)—voilà! This first recording displays the typical Crumb attributes: it's mysterious, unnerving, and delicately beautiful, seemingly fragile yet tough, like a spiderweb. The guitar is prominent throughout, mixing with soprano saxophone (intoning occasional phrases from "Amazing Grace"), concertina, harp, double bass, and such percussion instruments as rain stick and dulcimer. The Speculum Musicae ensemble (which performs this week at the Miller Theatre) makes the perfect advocate for this ultra-refined score, as well as for two earlier works born of Crumb's obsession with García Lorca: "Federico's Little Songs for Children" (1986) and "Night Music I" (in the première recording of its 1976 revision). A word to the wise: though Crumb's music often drifts into deep quietude, do not tempt fate by unduly increasing your system's volume. Instead, listen more intently.

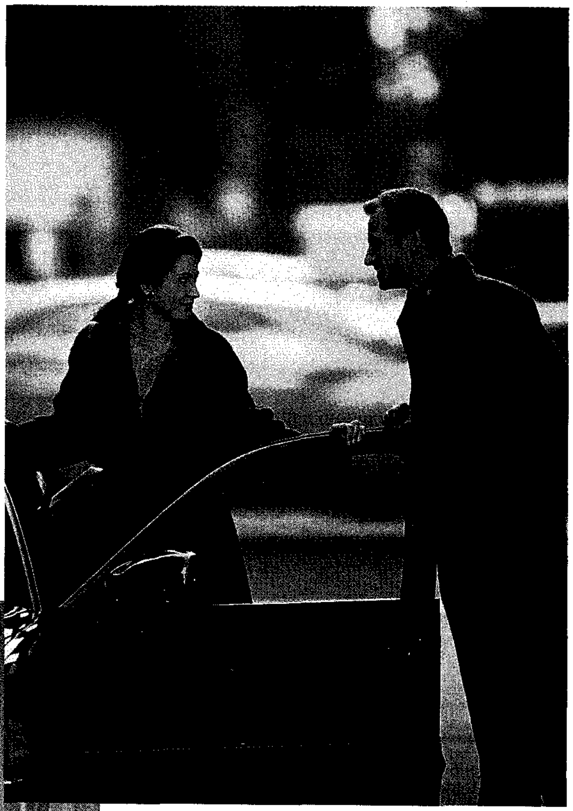
NEW YORK CITY OPERA—**LA BOHÈME.** (March 26 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT.** (March 28 at 8.) . . . **DON GIOVANNI.** (March 29 at 1:30.) . . . **LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN.** (March 29 at 8.) . . . A double bill of Orff's **CARMINA BURANA** and Weill's **THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.** (March 30 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

TEATRO GRATTACIELO—*Grattacielo* is Italian for skyscraper, an appropriate symbol for a new opera company based in our city of big buildings. Since the organization purports to revive forgotten Italian verismo operas, though, the choice of Italo Montemezzi's "L'Amore dei Tre Re" for its inaugural production is baffling: the work owes much to literary and musical Symbolism (as embodied in such operas as "Tristan und Isolde" and "Pelléas et Mélisande") but has nothing to do with verismo. In any case, this tragic tale of marital infidelity, set in tenth-century Italy, does qualify as largely forgotten. Though it enjoyed only modest success following its première, at La Scala in 1913, it was a Metropolitan Opera staple for thirty-five years before disappearing from the roster in 1949. New York City Opera offered it for a couple of seasons (most recently in 1981-82), but it has pretty much dropped from public consciousness. Gary Di Pasquasio conducts this concert performance, which features soprano Margaret Cusack, tenor Vahan Khanzadian, baritone Louis Otey, and bass-baritone Philip Cokorinos. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 26 at 8.)



Park and 47th
Attraction.

Park and 61st
Flirtation.



Park and 89th
Conversation.

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Beethoven's "Coriolan" Overture and his Piano Concerto No. 5 (with Evgeny Kissin), as well as Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sheherazade." (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 27 and March 29 at 8, March 28 at 2, and April 1 at 7:30.)

"St. Matthew Passion"—A theatrical version of Bach's Lenten masterpiece, staged by Jonathan Miller, with Paul Goodwin leading the soloists and an ad-hoc choir and orchestra. (Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. March 26-29 at 7:30.)

"Ein Deutsches Requiem"—Brahms's consoling masterpiece, performed by the St. Bartholomew's Choir and the Fairfield Orchestra, conducted by William Trafka. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. March 26 at 8.)

Academy of Ancient Music—The British period-instrument orchestra offers music of Handel and Bach, including the latter's A-Minor Violin Concerto (featuring Andrew Manze) and his Cantata No. 202 (with soprano Emma Kirkby). Christopher Hogwood conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 30 at 3.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard leads Mendelssohn's Double Concerto for Violin and Piano (featuring the husband-and-wife team of Ik-Hwan Bae and Sung-Mi Im), in addition to pieces by Grieg, Mozart, Elgar, and Benjamin Godard. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. March 31 at 2 and 7 and April 1 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Christian Thielemann conducts Weber's "Euryanthe" Overture, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with András Schiff), and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 1 at 8.)

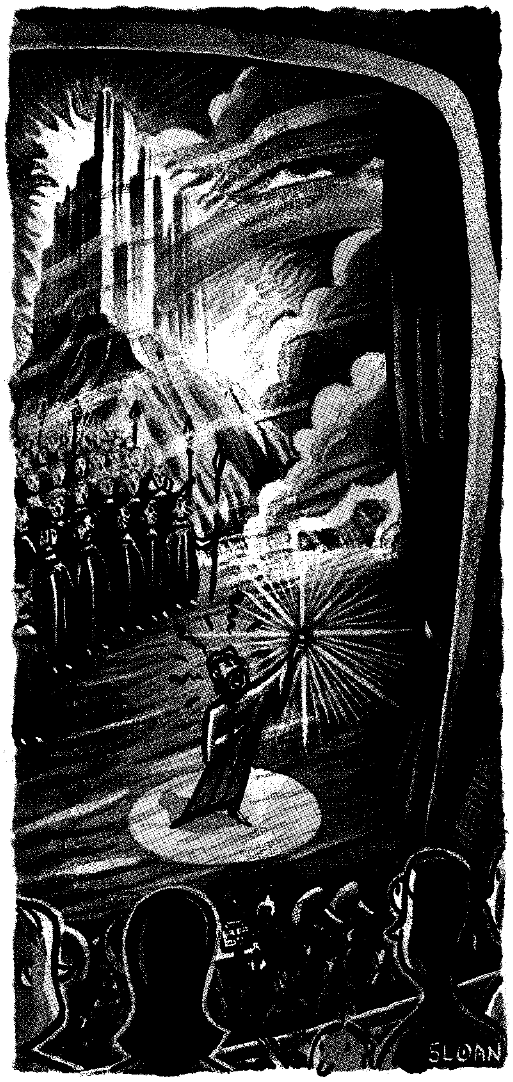
RECITALS

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The opening concert of the group's "Second Helpings" series, designed to keep deserving contemporary works in the spotlight beyond their premières, features woodwind quintets by David Sampson, Larry Bell, and Andrew Thomas. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. March 26 at 6:30. For information about tickets, call 840-7470.)

Lois Svard—The pianist offers works composed within the past year by Stephen Scott, Annea Lockwood, David First, and Kirk Nurock, as well as works from the late eighties by Jerry Hunt and György Ligeti. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 26 at 8.)

Ned Rorem—The composer will be on hand to discuss his music during a concert that includes his cycle "The Auden Poems" (performed by tenor Jerry Hadley and the Moscow Conservatory Trio). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 26 at 8.)

Schubertiade—The 92nd Street Y's decade-long Schubert celebration reaches its final installment, and if it hasn't delivered what it originally promised—a complete, chronological survey of the composer's music—it's provided plenty of musical pleasures all the same. This final chapter focusses on music written during the composer's last years. March 26 at 8: A re-creation of "Franz Schubert's Invitation Concert," performed in Vienna on March 26, 1828. The only public all-Schubert concert presented in the composer's lifetime, it played to an appreciative audience and provided the composer with some much needed income. Unfortunately, Paganini, who had just arrived on the Viennese musical scene, stole the limelight, and the next all-Schubert concert (substantially a repeat of the same program) was to raise money for the composer's headstone. The evening comprises lieder (including the obbligato song "Auf dem Strom"), works for men's choir, the first movement of the G-Major String Quartet (D. 887, presumably the piece identified as a "new quartet" on the 1828 program), and the E-Flat-Major Piano Trio. The performing roster includes baritone Hermann Prey, pianist Michael Endres, the Hugo Wolf String Quartet, and the Beethoven Trio Vienna. . . . ¶ March 27 at 8: Pianist Garrick Ohlsson performs Schubert's Three Piano Pieces (D. 946), his A-Major Sonata (D. 959), and his B-Flat-Major Sonata (D. 960). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. The Schubertiade continues through April 10.)



Wagner's "Ring" cycle, beginning with "Das Rheingold," at the Metropolitan Opera.

MICHAEL SLOAN

Bargemusic—Presenting Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata, Shostakovich's Twelve Preludes for Violin and Piano, and Chausson's Piano Quartet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. March 27 at 7:30 and March 30 at 4.)

New York Philomusica Chamber Ensemble—Performing divertimentos by Haydn and Mozart, as well as Ligeti's 1982 Horn Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 27 at 8.)

"Schubert's Universe"—On March 29, a panel discussion about Biedermeier Vienna (at 4), followed by a concert (at 7) comprising Schubert's B-Flat-Major String Trio and F-Major Octet. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—The ensemble plays piano trios by Brahms (in C Minor), Dvořák (the "Dumky"), and Schumann (in D Minor). (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. March 29 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Sundays on the Island—Sonatas and duets by Bach, Brahms, and Ravel. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. March 30 at noon.)

Yael Weiss—Pianist, performing Szymanowski's Prelude and Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, Bach's C-Minor Partita, and Chopin's Scherzo No. 1. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. March 30 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Iris Regev and Yael Weiss—Cellist and pianist, performing music by Fauré, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. March 31 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Speculum Musicae—The modern-music group performs chamber works by composers who have been associated with Columbia University's music department: Jack Beeson, Mario Davidovsky, George Edwards, Jonathan Kramer, Fred Lerdahl, and Charles Wuorinen. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 1 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

The Cruelest Month—The Academy of American Poets kicks off National Poetry Month with an April Fool's Day reading that could lend new resonance to Eliot's overquoted line. On April 1 at 7, Fran Lebowitz, David Lehman, John Berendt, and others declaim lines from "Very Bad Poetry," a new anthology of regrettable verse. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Tickets at the door.)

You Drive Me Crazy—The latest driveway status symbols and midlife-crisis pacifiers are the stars at the New York International Automobile Show. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. March 29 to April 6. For more information, call 800-282-3336.)

Readings—March 27 at 7:30: Sesshu Foster reads from "City Terrace Field Manual," his collection of prose poems about Los Angeles, and Kimiko Hahn reads poems from her collection "The Unbearable Heart." (Asian American Writers' Workshop, 37 St. Marks Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 30 at 7: An evening of short fiction, with Daniel Menaker and Matthew Klam reading from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 31 at 8: David Guterson ("Snow Falling on Cedars") and James Salter ("A Sport and a Pastime") read from their latest work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—March 26 at 6: Short-story writer Mavis Gallant, who has long lived in Paris, discusses a passion of hers, the Dreyfus Affair's literary legacy. Poet and translator Richard Howard provides the introductory remarks. (Mercantile Library, 17 E. 47th St. For reservations, which are required, call 755-6710.) . . . ¶ March 26 at 7: Following a screening of "Fear and Favor in the Newsroom," a documentary on corporate censorship of the news, Trudy Lieberman joins fellow-journalists Sydney Schanberg, Bill Dedman, and Jonathan Kwitny (who appear in the film) to mull over what can and cannot be said, in a panel discussion led by former *Times* reporter Frances Cerra Whittelsey. (Tishman Auditorium, New York University, 40 Washington Sq. S. For reservations, call 219-8489.) . . . ¶ March 27 at 6: Gallery owner Holly Solomon, writer Anthony Haden-Guest, artists Donald Sultan and Richard Phillips, and others offer their reactions to the Whitney Biennial. (Benetton, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ March 27 at 8: Charlie Rose talks with director Jonathan Miller about Miller's latest project, a staged version of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" (see Classical Music—Orchestras and Choruses). (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. For more information, call 423-3587.)

Walks—March 29 at 1: Paul B. Haydon, curator of the Seventh Regiment Armory (Park Ave. at 66th St.), leads a Municipal Art Society tour through that nineteenth-century landmark. For reservations, which are required, call 935-3960. . . . ¶ March 30 at noon: Seth Kamil, of Big Onion Walking Tours, discusses Jewish immigration on an Easter Sunday walk around Ellis Island. For more information, call 439-1090.

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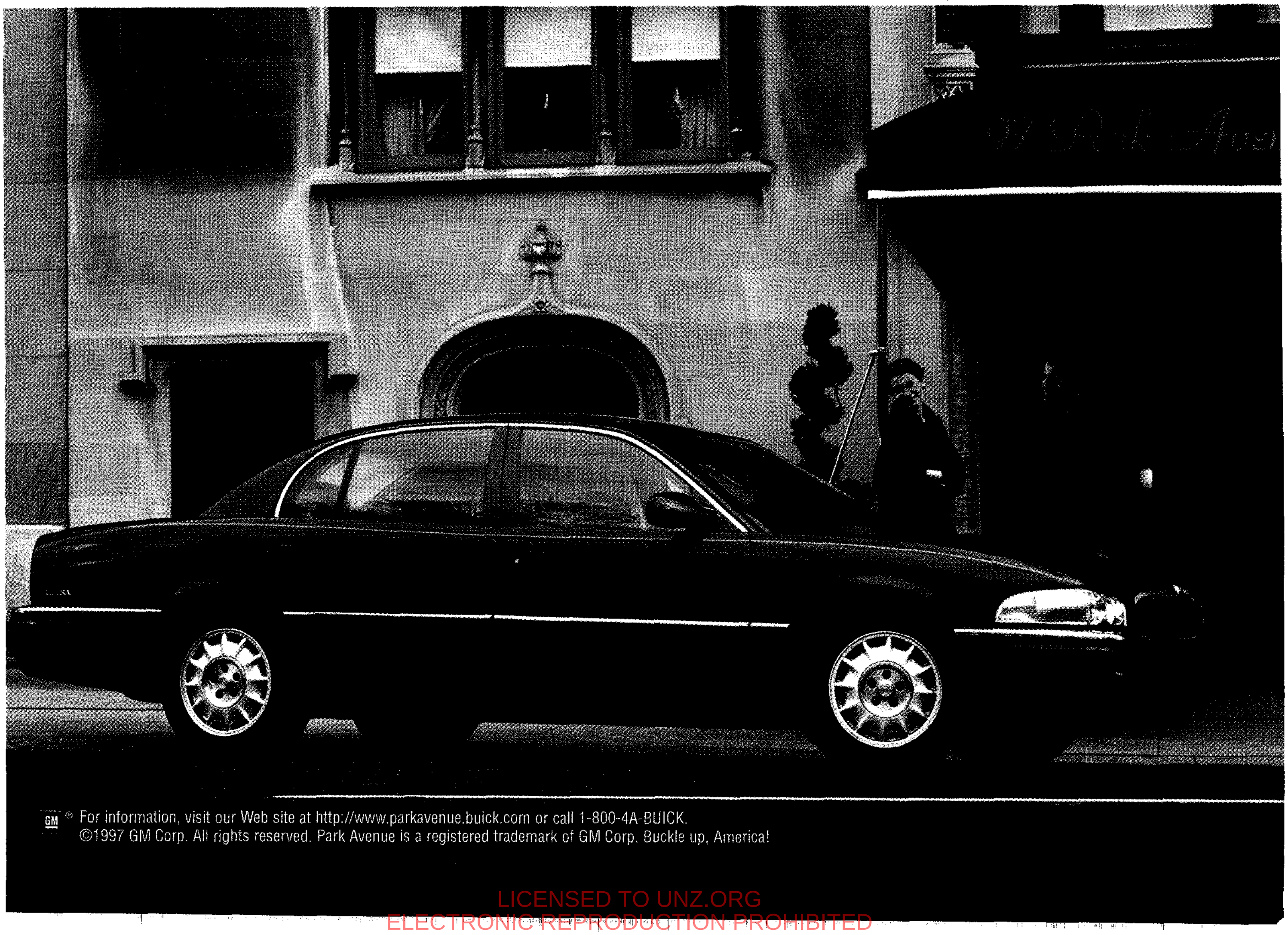

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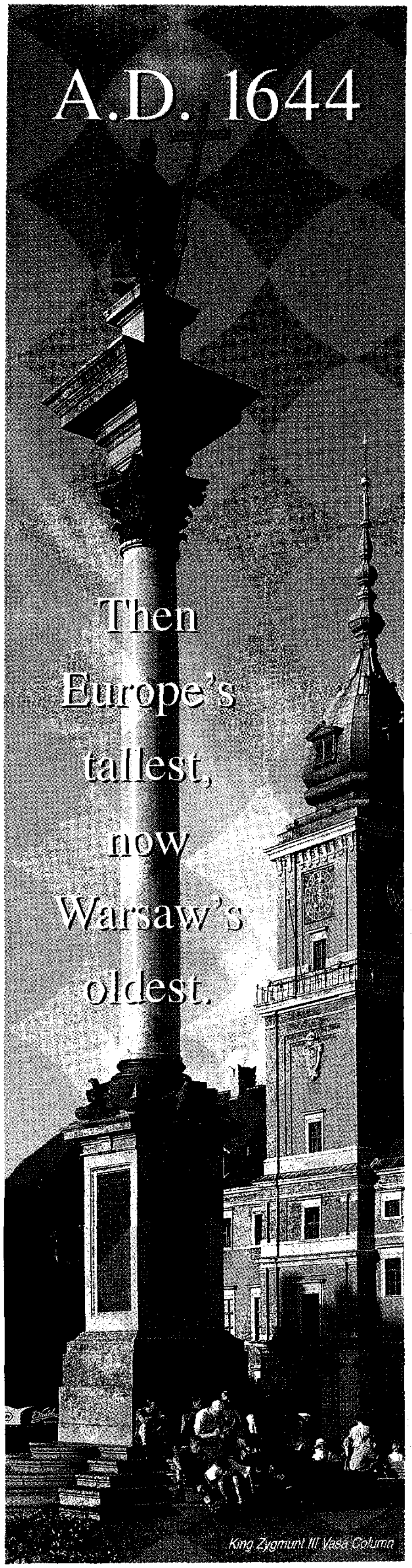
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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

B.A.P.S.—Two Georgia women (Halle Berry and Natalie Desselle) save a Beverly Hills millionaire (Martin Landau) from his scheming heirs, in a comedy directed by Robert Townsend. Opening March 28. (84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Cats Don't Dance—An animated musical with songs by Randy Newman, choreography created by the late Gene Kelly, and the voices of Scott Bakula, Jasmine Guy, and Natalie Cole. Directed by Mark Dindal. Opening March 26. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Devil's Own—Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt star in Alan J. Pakula's tale of friendship, hidden identity, and the Irish Troubles. Opening March 26. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th & 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Hotel Manor Inn—A black comedy about the transformation of an insane asylum into a grand hotel. With John Randolph, Sam Trammel, Fred Norris, and Burke Moses. Directed by Wayne Chesler. Opening March 28. (Quad Cinema.)

Love and Other Catastrophes—Australian director Emma-Kate Croghan chronicles a day in the life of two film students (Frances O'Conner and Alice Garner) preparing to throw a party in their new apartment. Opening March 28. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Eastside Playhouse.)

The Sixth Man—The extra player on a college basketball team is a ghost (Kadeem Hardison), who helps lead his brother (Marlon Wayans) and the other athletes to the N.C.A.A. Championships. Directed by Randall Miller. Opening March 28. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie—The further adventures of the teen-age action heroes who dress in blue, yellow, red, pink, and green. Directed by David Winning and Shuki Levy. Opening March 28. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 30.)

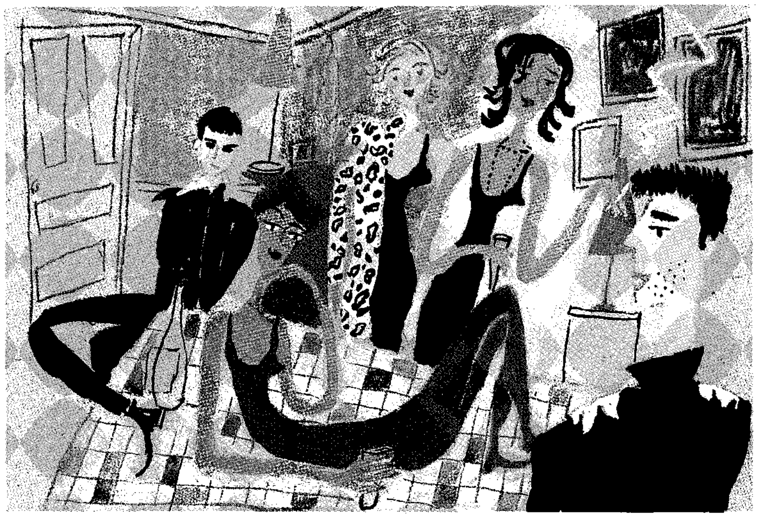
Boys Life 2—Two years ago, the first "Boys Life" proved there was an audience for short, gay-themed films, and this latest bundle wrapped up by Strand Releasing is more consistent than the last. It gets off to a shaky start with Nickolas Perry's "Must Be the Music" (pretty boys and little else). But it gains momentum with "Nunzio's Second Cousin," Tom DeCerchio's segment about gay-bashing, in which Vincent D'Onofrio gives a funny, scary performance as a gay cop who teaches some punks a lesson. The third film is the best: "Alkalai, Iowa," written and directed with great confidence and care by Mark Christopher, is a jewel of a story about a young gay farmer's investigation into his father's past; it makes its points so quietly and indirectly that it comes close to poetry. The final film, director Peggy Rajski's "Trevor"—about a boy who worships Diana Ross—is the audience pleaser (it won an Oscar in 1995): funny and hip, with plenty of sparkle. It was written by James Lecesne, who originally delivered the monologue onstage. Taken together, the films are like the chat at a gay bistro: a little talky, but funny and full of knowing camaraderie.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

City of Industry—John Irvin's bracing crime melodrama adheres to one of the simplest (and most satisfying) hardboiled formulas, but the movie is remarkably free of self-consciousness, and its clean, unpretentious craftsmanship may come as a shock to audiences that have grown accustomed to the postmodern pulp of Quentin Tarantino and his many imitators. The screenplay, by Ken Solarz, gives us first the pleasure of a meticulously planned and coolly executed jewelry-store heist, and then the jolt of a double cross. (As always, there's one gang member who doesn't see the value of sharing.) The role of avenging the betrayal falls to the quietest and wariest of the thieves—an old pro named Roy Egan (Harvey Keitel), who has the lone-wolf temperament that the task requires. Keitel brilliantly embodies the low-down expertise that the movie as a whole celebrates. Like Irvin and Solarz, he's a die-hard, and together they remind us of something the postmodernists have forgotten: that the allure of this kind of thriller is, ultimately, *the romance of competence*. Also with Stephen Dorff, Timothy Hutton, Famke Janssen, and Wade Dominguez.—T.R. (3/24/97) (84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through March 27. . . . ¶ Embassy 4; starting March 28.)

Crash—A film by David Cronenberg, based on J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel about the eros of automobile accidents. With James Spader, Holly Hunter, Elias Koteas, Deborah Kara Unger, and Rosanna Arquette. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center, Criterion Center, Orpheum VII, Regency, and Sutton.)

The Daytrippers—This low-budget début feature by the writer and director Greg Mottola is no big deal, but it's worth searching out. The heroine, a Long Island schoolteacher (Hope Davis), suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity, and confesses her fears to her parents (Anne Meara and Pat McNamara), her sister (Parker Posey), and her sister's boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). The whole group then piles into the car and heads for Manhattan, following a few tenuous leads and hoping to pick up the elusive husband's scent. The odd dynamics of this suburban-family posse generate most of the picture's humor. It's a terrific ensemble, and Mottola's affection for the characters is obvious: he squeezes as much comic juice out of them as he can without crushing them. Also with Campbell Scott.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Donnie Brasco—From Mike Newell, the man who brought you "Four Weddings and a Funeral," a movie with four killings and a dismemberment, and that's just in one scene. Even as you get pulled into the plot, you may detect a touch of fakery in the proceedings—a faintly risible determination to get down and dirty. The title character, played by Johnny Depp, is an undercover F.B.I. agent who infiltrates the Mafia by pretending to be a crooked jeweller—and also by pretending, even more successfully, to be incredibly dull. For some reason he is accepted into the Mob and befriended by Lefty (Al Pacino), a hoodlum on the wane. Pacino, as you would expect, gives a fine demonstration of sagging soulfulness, but it's hard to believe that people are still making movies that require us to feel sorry for mobsters. Paul Attanasio's script works hard to make fun of them, but Newell deadens any comedy in his quest for a violent mood piece.



Emma-Kate Croghan's "Love and Other Catastrophes."

BETH ADAMS

Other thugs are played by Bruno Kirby and, of course, Michael Madsen.—A.L. (3/17/97) (Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Eighth Day—Harry (Daniel Auteuil) is a salesman who teaches other salesmen how to smile while neglecting the welfare of his children: from this we are meant to infer that he is a hollow shell of a man. The person destined to fill him with joy and understanding is Georges (Pascal Duquenne), a victim of Down's syndrome who, having left his residential home, encounters Harry on a dark road and sets about changing his life. Jaco Van Dormael's second movie, like "Toto the Hero," his first, blends the troubling and the fantastical, but this time the mixture fails to rise. There is still immense grace in the way Van Dormael seems to happen upon startling images, but the emotional principle of the picture is obvious and embarrassing: Georges exists to cure the trouble with Harry. The movie gushes, and the later scenes borrow, without profit, from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." Duquenne, who has Down's syndrome himself, is a reviving presence: his cadenzas of sweetness and intransigence just about rescue the movie from monotony. In French.—A.L. (3/17/97) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katharine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Gray's Anatomy—A Spalding Gray monologue dressed up as a film. It's happened before, in "Swimming to Cambodia." This time, though, the dressing is pretty fancy: the director, Steven Soderbergh, backs the monologuist with throbbing lights, blue skies, dry ice, and what appears to be hellfire. The picture is beautifully cut, and there's a stateliness to the camera movements which few could achieve. Yet you can't help sensing a faint desperation in the attempt to lay a visual gloss on what is basically an adventure in language. This time, Gray's subject (insofar as he ever has one) is the failing of his eyes, or, to be precise, a "macular pucker" in one of them. If that sounds disgusting, it is, and it sends him off through a host of alternative therapies, including an Indian sweat lodge and knifeless "psychic surgery" from an Elvis look-alike in the Philippines. None of them work, of course, but Gray is too quizzical to be a full-time mocker, and the movie is an homage to laconic tolerance. Whether it really *is* a movie is another matter. It would make one of the best radio broadcasts you ever heard.—A.L. (Film Forum.)

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Kama Sutra—In Mira Nair's fairy tale, set in sixteenth-century India, Indira Varma plays a poor sexpot who seduces the king, gets cast out of her home, becomes a courtesan, and finally falls in love with the court sculptor (Ramon Tikaram). The movie succeeds so beautifully as a feast for the senses that Nair, apparently, sees no need to make the characters or the dialogue interesting.—S.K. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through March 27.)

Kolya—A likable enough Czech reworking of a tried-and-true formula: a sort of "Kramer vs. Kramer" set in Prague, in 1988-89, at the dawn of the Velvet Revolution. The screenwriter, Zdenek Sverak, also plays the central character, a bachelor cellist who suddenly finds himself responsible for an adorable Russian five-year-old. The cellist slowly grows out of his selfishness, and his love for this child who doesn't speak his language points to the new, boundaryless world that's about to open up. Directed by Jan Sverak. In Czech.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

Liar Liar—Jim Carrey plays a compulsive liar who is forced to tell the truth for twenty-four hours. Written by Paul Guay and Stephen Mazur. Directed by Tom Shadyac. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Love Jones—This romantic comedy about a group of young middle-class blacks tries a little too hard to be engagingly witty and upscale, but it's notable for its deep, focussed textures (soft browns, blacks, and golds that heighten the clichés of the story into an urban fairy tale) and for its actors, some of the most attractive—and sexiest—in a long time. The chemistry of the leads, Larenz Tate and Nia Long, is enough to make the movie likable, and they're surrounded by equally sassy friends and neighbors. But the situations that Theodore Witcher, the writer and director, cooks up for them are pretty nothings. (The film is set in Chicago's smoky poetry scene, with jazz placed tastefully throughout.) Still, the slow groove of the characters' frank and funny bedroom discussions gives the picture a lovely glow.—B.D. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Marvin's Room—Jerry Zaks's strength-through-illness drama, adapted by the late Scott McPherson from his 1990 play. Bessie (Diane Keaton), who spends her time caring for her bedridden father (Hume Cronyn), discovers that she herself has leukemia; the search for a bone-marrow donor leads her to her sister, Lee (Meryl Streep), whom she hasn't seen in twenty years. Both women give it all they've got, but this cloying film doesn't deserve their generosity. Leonardo DiCaprio is highly convincing as Lee's dysfunctional son.—A.L. (1/20/97) (Cinema 3, Guild, and The Screening Room.)

Prisoner of the Mountains—A picture set against the background of the war in Chechnya, about two Russian soldiers captured and held in the hope of an exchange of prisoners. The director, Sergei Bodrov, unfolds his hushed brotherhood-of-man tale (which was inspired by a Tolstoy story) in a showy but poetic way, filling it with moody, haunted, compellingly fresh and beautiful images. In Russian.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Private Parts—Howard Stern's bid for the love of millions has plenty of isolated hilarious bits, and Stern, who plays himself, is surprisingly photogenic. But the film asks us to see him as both unusually lovable and bravely moral, and that's just too much. The first part rushes through his awkward youth, establishing all the reasons for his anger (loud and selfish parents, big nose). The second part shows him climbing the d.j. ladder, shedding his false eagerness to please, and finally becoming himself. The disingenuous screenplay, by Len Blum and Michael Kolesniko, plays up Stern's vulnerability and leaves out a lot of his radio show's true meanness. The only people he has any real conflict with are his stiff network bosses, and even they see the light when the money finally starts rolling in. Mary McCormack plays Stern's cute, clean-cut wife. Directed by Betty Thomas.—S.K. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Secrets & Lies—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

Shine—The hero of Scott Hicks's absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. Although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. Also with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, and John Gielgud (who's in especially buoyant comic form).—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

Sling Blade—Billy Bob Thornton wrote and directed this dunderheaded film, in which he plays a simpleton who, released from an asylum for the criminally insane after serving twenty-five years for the murder of his mother and her lover, returns to his poor Southern home town and ends up befriending a small boy and defending him against *his* mom's abusive boyfriend. Although the film does have two terrific actors—Dwight Yoakam, as the menacing boyfriend, and John Ritter, as a gay store manager—its critical success is mystifying; it's hard to believe that anybody could fall for its dim homilies.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

Smilla's Sense of Snow—For a while, this adaptation of Peter Hoeg's 1993 best-seller plays as a ghost story. The director, Bille August, and his superb cinematographer, Jörgen Persson, lay on a wonderfully eerie, winter-light mood: chilly, hushed, uneasy. But when the screenplay, by Ann Biderman, takes Smilla, the detective heroine (Julia Ormond), from Copenhagen to Greenland, the fine suggestiveness of the movie's beginning collapses, like thin ice, under the weight of dumb shoot-outs, evil scientists, and breathless escapes.—T.R. (3/10/97) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

When We Were Kings—A foolproof documentary. Then again, it's hard to see how anyone could mess up the story of the 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman: the drama is all there, ripe for the telling, and the director, Leon Gast, grabs the opportunity with both hands. To maintain the suspense, he enlists help from a wide range of Ali fans: George Plimpton, Spike Lee, and, above all, Norman Mailer, who talks about that night with the unabated excitement of a child.—A.L. (2/17/97) (Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA: Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BREAKING THE WAVES** (reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96): Eastside Playhouse and Quad Cinema. . . . **DAYLIGHT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DRUNKS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU:** New York Twin and The Screening Room. . . . **EVITA** (1/6/97): Gotham Cinema. . . . **FARGO** (3/25/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FIERCE CREATURES** (2/3/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **HAMLET** (1/13/97): Paris. . . . **JERRY MAGUIRE** (12/16/96): Lincoln Square. . . . **JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE:** Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 2, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **LOST HIGHWAY** (3/10/97): 34th St. East and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MANDELA:** Angelika 57 and Cinema Village. . . . **MICHAEL:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT** (1/13/97): Art Greenwich Twin and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY** (1/6/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE QUIET ROOM:** 68th St. Playhouse. . . . **RETURN OF THE JEDI:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Ziegfeld. . . . **ROSEWOOD:** Chelsea Cinemas, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **SELENA:** 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 72nd Street East, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **STAR WARS:** Chelsea Cinemas and Lincoln Square. . . . **THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE:** 62nd & Broadway and Quad Cinema. . . . **WAITING FOR GUFFMAN:** Angelika Film Center.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

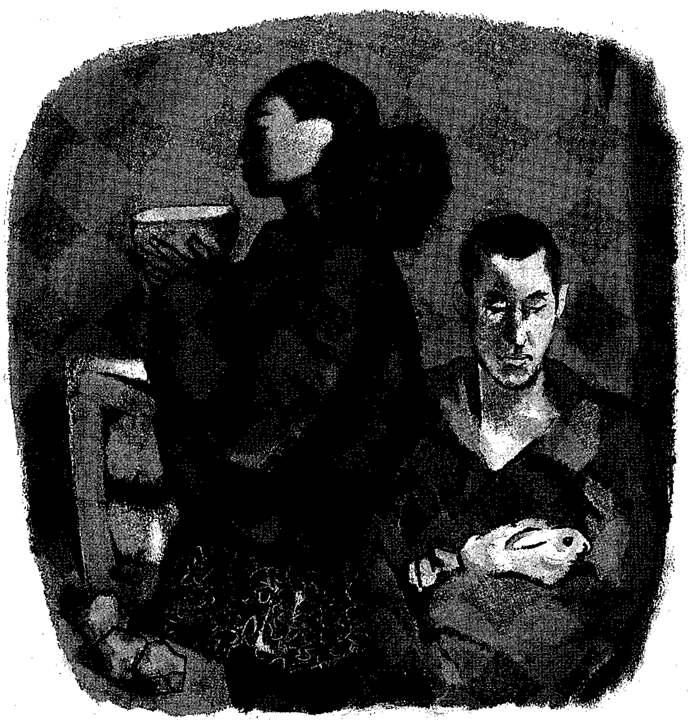
Animal Crackers (1930)—The Marx Brothers in their pre-Hollywood period; like "The Cocoanuts" of the year before, it was a Broadway musical comedy, slightly adapted, and filmed in Astoria—and it looks stagey. But the film is too joyous for cavilling. Groucho is the fearless African explorer Captain Spaulding, who deigns to attend a party at Rittenhouse Manor on Long Island; Margaret Dumont is Mrs. Rittenhouse and Lillian Roth is her daughter Arabella. Arguably the best line: "Signor Ravelli's first selection will be 'Somewhere My Love Lies Sleeping' with a male chorus." Once again, the writers were George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind. Directed by Victor Heerman.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; April 1.)

The Godfather (1972)—A wide, startlingly vivid view of a Mafia dynasty, in which organized crime becomes an obscene nightmare image of American free enterprise. The movie is a popular melodrama with its roots in the gangster films of the thirties, but it expresses a new tragic realism, and it's altogether extraordinary. Francis Ford Coppola directed. Marlon Brando is Don Vito Corleone, with Al Pacino, John Cazale, James Caan, and Talia Shire as his children. The script, credited to Mario Puzo and Coppola, is based on Puzo's best-seller.—P.K. (Astor Plaza.)

The Member of the Wedding (1952)—The Carson McCullers dialogue is one of the high points of literacy in American films—sharp and full of wit, yet lyrical. Scrawny, cracked-voiced Julie Harris (she was twenty-six at the time) plays Frankie, the motherless, fiercely lonely twelve-year-old tomboy, caught between childhood and adolescence, and fighting them both. Ethel Waters plays Berenice, the cook who looks after her, and Brandon deWilde is Frankie's owlish little playmate and whipping boy. The setting is a small Georgia town; the time is the summer when these three characters, who have been clinging to each other, are torn apart. Adapted from McCullers's 1950 stage success (with the same cast), the film is weak when it tries to "open up" the material, but fortunately Fred Zinnemann's direction respects McCullers's intensity and humor.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; March 30.)

One Hour with You (1932)—Ernst Lubitsch directed most of the Samson Raphaelson screenplay (taking over from George Cukor in the first week of production), but this Parisian piffle lacks the casual yet intricate magic of Lubitsch and Raphaelson's next joint effort, "Trouble in Paradise." Maurice Chevalier stars as a doctor blissfully married to Jeanette MacDonald; her best friend (Genevieve Tobin), less happily wed (to Roland Young), keeps trying to get Chevalier into bed. With cheerful songs by Oscar Straus and Leo Robin and silly bits of spoken verse, it's like a boudoir farce half-transformed into operetta, but there are disappointingly few comic complications. Chevalier's charm-is-all persona (which made him such a useful target for Marcel Ophuls in "The Sorrow and the Pity") carries the show; he addresses the audience directly and easily, like a convivial m.c. Charlie Ruggles offers endearingly clumsy counterpoint as Chevalier's best friend and MacDonald's would-be lover. From the play "Only a Dream," by Lothar Schmidt, which had been previously filmed by Lubitsch as the 1924 silent "The Marriage Circle."—M.S. (Film Forum 2; March 30-31.)

She (1935)—Hilarious, terrible, essential. Over the land of Kor rules She (Helen Gahagan Douglas, before her political career), kept young throughout five centuries by her Flame of Eternal Youth. The stagey décor of Kor is in the Art Deco style of Radio City Music Hall; the dialogue, however, belongs to an earlier age. A pair of lovebirds (Helen Mack and Randolph Scott) intrude upon the realm, and She, who takes a fancy to Scott and plans to make a human sacrifice of her rival, tries one too many dips in the Flame. No one but H. Rider Haggard could have dreamed up the story; Irving Pichel and Lansing C. Holden directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 28-29.)



At Walter Reade Theatre, Alice Houri and Grégoire Colin in "Nénette et Boni."

BLITCH

The Young One (1960)—The genre is roughly that of "The Defiant Ones," with Bernie Hamilton as a black jazz clarinettist unjustly accused of rape and Zachary Scott as a racist game warden on the small Deep South island where Hamilton briefly hides out. But this is Luis Buñuel, not Stanley Kramer: what unites the two men isn't friendship or understanding but Scott's recognition that, as the defiler of an innocent fourteen-year-old (Key Meersman), he, too, is vulnerable before the law. Buñuel later professed fondness for this film and chalked up its commercial failure to its "anti-Manichaean stance"—that is, its lack of clearly etched good guys and bad guys. More likely, audiences reacted against the director's clinical distance: he sets up a human-tide-pool experiment whose chilly intrigue comes from the ways the characters adapt and survive. The most piercing moments belong to Meersman, a non-actress who's both natural and inscrutable, whether she is placing a liquor bottle at the head of her alcoholic grandpa's grave or doing a hopscotch step in high heels. Gabriel Figueroa's cinematography has a spare beauty, devoid of pastoral clichés. Buñuel co-wrote the script, with Hugo Butler, from the Peter Matthiessen story "Travellin' Man."—M.S. (Anthology Film Archives; March 31-April 1.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New Directors/New Films—A festival of international films. March 26 at 6 and March 27 at 9: "Love and Other Catastrophes" (Emma-Kate Croghan; Australia). . . . March 26 at 9 and March 27 at 6: "Bolshe Vita" (Ibolya Fekete; Hungary). . . . March 28 at 6 and March 29 at 3: "Black & White & Red All Over" (DeMane Davis, Harry McCoy, and Khari Streeter; United States). . . . March 28 at 9 and March 29 at noon: "In the Company of Men" (Neil LaBute; United States). . . . March 29 at 6 and March 30 at 3: "Three Friends" (Yim Soon-Rye; South Korea). . . . March 29 at 9 and March 30 at noon: "The Asphalt Kings" (Oussama Fawzi; Egypt). . . . March 30 at 6 and March 31 at 9: "Rainclouds Over Wushan" (Zhang Ming; People's Republic of China). . . . March 30 at 9 and March 31 at 6: "The Father" (Majid Majidi; Iran). . . . April 1 at 6: "Al Leja" (Ryad Chaia; Syria). . . . April 1 at 9: "Ah-Chong" (Chang Tso-chi; Taiwan). (Museum of Modern Art; Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 708-9500.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**theatre 2:** March 26: "The Easiest Way" (1931, Jack Conway) and "Beauty for Sale" (1933, Richard Boleslawski). . . . March 26 (evening only): "Girls About Town" (1931, George Cukor) and "Sinners in the Sun" (1932, Alexander Hall). . . . March 27: "Poor Little Rich Girl" (1936, Irving Cummings) and "Wake Up and Live" (1937, Sidney Lanfield). . . . March 28-29: "She" (†) and "The Black Cat" (1934, Edgar G. Ulmer). . . . March 30-31: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch) and "One Hour with You" (†). . . . April 1: "Animal Crackers" (†) and "Flying High" (1931, Charles Reisner). . . . **theatre 3:** "Le Samouraï" (1967, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of new French films; all in French, with English subtitles. March 26 at 2 and 6:15: "Pédale Douce" (Gabriel Aghion). . . . March 26 at 4 and 8:30: "Bernie" (Albert Dupontel). . . . March 27 at 2 and 6:45: "Nénette et Boni" (Claire Denis). . . . March 27 at 4:15 and 9: "Shadow Play" (Martine Dugowson). . . . ¶ March 28 at 2, 4, 6, and 8:30; March 29 at 4, 6, and 8:30; March 30 at 4, 6, and 8; and March 31 at 2, 4, 6, and 8: "Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse" (1996, Anne Belle and Deborah Dickson).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—March 30 at 2: "Dead Man" (1996, Jim Jarmusch), with Johnny Depp and Robert Mitchum. . . . March 30 at 4:30: "The Man by the Shore" (1996, Raoul Peck), with Jennifer Zubar.

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer. April 1 at 7:30: the New York City Gay Men's Chorus will sing songs by Jerry Herman, followed by "Hello, Dolly!" (1969, Gene Kelly).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On March 30 at 7, the feature will be "The Member of the Wedding" (†).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—March 26 at 9 and March 27-31 and April 1 at 6: "The White Balloon" (1995, Jafar Panahi). . . . ¶ A program of films by Luis Buñuel. March 27 at 6 and 10: "Phantom of Liberty" (1974). . . . March 27 at 8: "On Guard!" (1936). . . . March 28 at 8 and March 29-30 at 4 and 8: "The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz" (1955). . . . March 28 at 10 and March 29-30 at 6 and 10: "El" (1952). . . . March 31-April 1 at 8: "The Young One" (†). . . . March 31-April 1 at 10: "Robinson Crusoe" (1952). . . . ¶ March 27 at 8:30 and March 28-29 at 9:30: "Naked" (1993, Mike Leigh). . . . ¶ March 28-29 at 8: Two different programs of films by Ron Rice.

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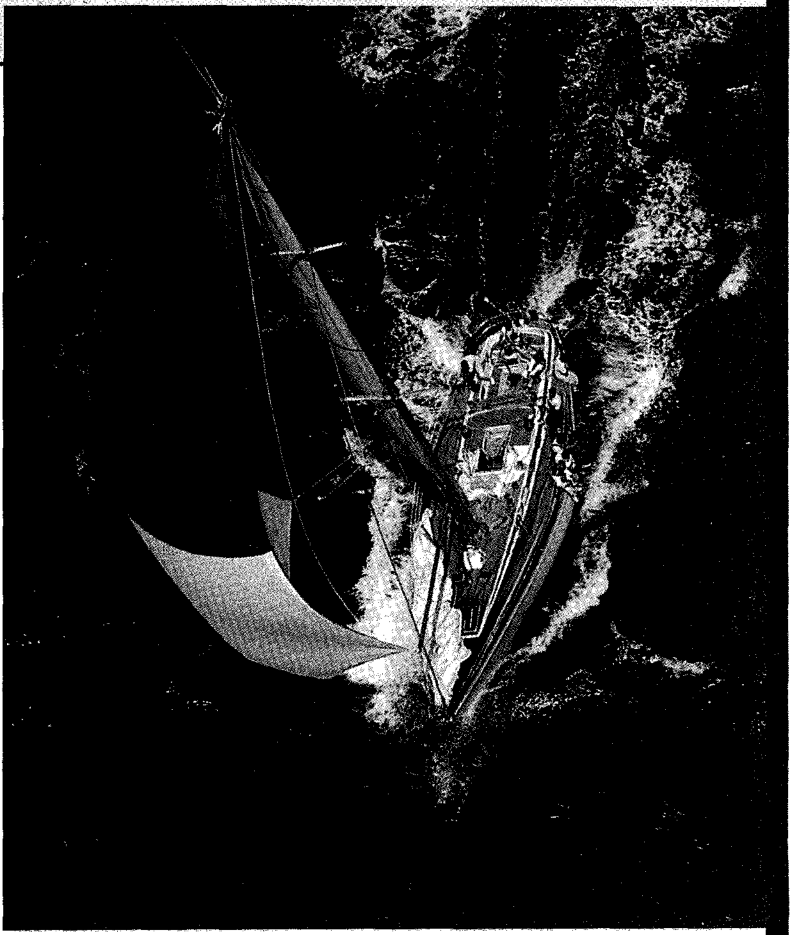

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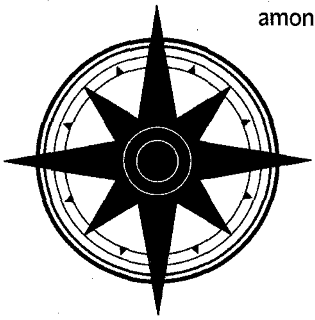

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

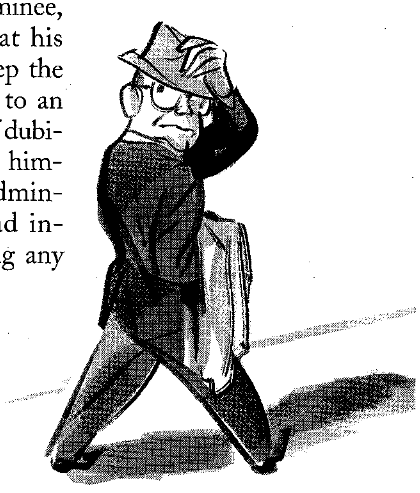
TONY LAKE IS MISSING

In explaining his abrupt withdrawal last week as President Clinton's nominee for director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Anthony Lake issued a scorching lament about the loss of civility in Washington, saying that the place had gone "haywire." Lake's words were in keeping with his career, which has been mostly that of a Harvard-honed, behind-the-scenes foreign-policy mandarin. To Washington insiders, however, the explanation seemed incomplete. Surely the current level of partisan rancorousness could not have surprised so sophisticated a political veteran. And although the questioning to which Lake was subjected by the Senate Intelligence Committee and its chairman, Richard Shelby, had sometimes been gratuitously rude, it was not unusually so. Why would a good soldier like Tony Lake, who had bravely resigned from Henry Kissinger's staff to protest the American invasion of Cambodia, quit rather than rise to the challenge of rescuing the faltering C.I.A.?

Speculation increased the day after Lake's announcement, when Senator Robert Kerrey, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said that he had questions about whether Lake had made a "potentially disqualifying mistake." It was a change of heart that may have been what finally prompted a discouraged Lake to give up. Following the usual Beltway script, Kerrey's remarks set off the predictable chatter about public veracity and private vulnerability. A clue that some pounced on was the fact that, midway through his stint as national-security adviser, Lake had separated from his wife. Soon thereafter, he had been seen around town with his deputy director at the National Security Council, Nancy Sodeberg. Inside the N.S.C., the two officials were believed to "talk through everything"; in the words of one colleague, they had "a professional marriage."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

The script thickened when the Lake-Sodeberg alliance was viewed retrospectively, in the light of a story that had broken just hours before Lake's withdrawal. The piece, which ran on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, revealed that a Lebanese-American oilman, Roger Tamraz—who was wanted for questioning in Lebanon about allegedly embezzling two hundred million dollars, and who had reportedly donated, on his own behalf and through his company, a hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars to Democratic causes—had attended White House events over the strong objections of the N.S.C. In ordinary times, the story might have been greeted as good news for the nominee, since it indicated that his team had tried to keep the White House closed to an international fat cat of dubious repute. But Lake himself, according to Administration sources, had informally denied having any knowledge of the Tamraz business. More awkward still was a report that the highest-level N.S.C. official to have dealt with Tamraz was Sodeberg. This suggested at least three possibilities, not all of them mutually exclusive: 1) that Lake had been inattentive to what his staff was up to; 2) that his closest colleague had kept the matter to herself, so that her boss would remain above the fray; or 3) that the head of the N.S.C. had been less than candid on a matter he must have known about. In any case, as one White House official said in a post-mortem last week, "we couldn't really have put Nancy on as a character witness." Asked whether he thought the hearings would have raised questions about the nominee's relationship with his deputy, the official said, "I wouldn't have put it past Shelby."



Whatever the truth, the situation was an open invitation for Shelby to create a spiral of unflattering innuendo. Indeed, "getting Anthony Lake" seems to have been a prime goal of White House enemies, from the moment the nomination was announced. Two participants in a gathering of Republican luminaries at the City Club in February recalled last week that one of the topics of the evening was which of Clinton's new Cabinet-level nominees would be easier to "take down"—the Labor Secretary-designate, Alexis Herman, or Lake. The group, which included the former G.O.P. chairman, Haley Barbour; William Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard;* and an aide to a member of the Intelligence Committee, decided that, given the Democrats' money scandals, the N.S.C. director was the more politically vulnerable.

If Lake hadn't known what his staff was up to, he could be painted as incompetent; if he did know about shady foreign donors, he could be accused of put-

REMEMBERING BILL

I FIRST heard about Bill de Kooning and his wife, Elaine, in 1953, from that other great Abstract Expressionist couple Jackson Pollock and his wife, Lee Krasner, who were neighbors of mine in the eastern Long Island hamlet of Springs. Lee hated the de Koonings. "*B.* de Kooning and *E.* de Kooning," she'd spit out scornfully, and I pictured rivalrous artists clawing each other's eyes out.

When I finally met them, Bill, with his angelic smile, was, as I remember, pitching in the local artists' softball game. He was a graceful athlete, with so little competitive spirit that he steamed a grapefruit painted to look like a softball across the plate to the collector Ben Heller, who took a mighty swat, splattering himself with pulp from head to toe. No one was keeping score; everyone was laughing.

When Bill moved out of the city and into a house right down the road from me, in the early sixties, Elaine stayed in New York. I'd see him on his old-fashioned bicycle, a quixotic, bareheaded figure pedalling very slowly: a man without a car, and a good thing, too—he was generally headed for the liquor store. When he painted, Bill was ferociously concentrated, but in real life, and even when he was drunk, he seemed shy and at loose ends, although he never missed a trick. He'd come over—I'd have stashed my liquor in the oven—and we'd dance and listen to operas, both of us hoping desperately that he would stay sober.

As an obsessive painter of women, he had an endless stream of girlfriends, toward whom he was the soul of chivalry. He once told me a rather startling story about the only Asian girl he'd ever known, back in Rotterdam. "She had straight pubic hair—can you beat that!" he said, in his high-pitched, breathless Dutch accent. "And you know what? I didn't say, 'Hey, you got straight pubic hair!' I didn't say it!"

As his drinking progressed, his mind began to go, but amusingly, forgivably. In the mid-seventies, after the deaths of Frank O'Hara and Fairfield Porter, he came to dinner one night and wondered why they weren't there, too. Reminded of the truth, he said, "Oh yah. Gee, that's too bad. I thought only fat men died, not thin men like that." He pronounced it "tin men," and you could see that, as a "tin man" himself, he felt endangered.

The last time I saw Bill was in 1988, after Elaine moved to Springs to devote herself to his well-being. She invited some friends for lunch at his studio, where a staff of assistants, cooks, and assorted helpers now attended him. Some of his exhilarating later paintings stood around the enormous studio: white, with purple, red, and blue lines swelling and thinning, unspooling and looping deliriously across "canvases as huge as the sky," as a painter friend described them. Three older works on paper rested on easels; a book open to an early Picasso lay on a table. Inane chatter drifted in from a TV set nearby.

A strangely sober Bill wandered about somewhat vacantly, hands clasped behind his back, staying close to his paintings and a large worktable crowded with brushes and giant paint tubes. By then, he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and although he didn't remember me—or anyone except his wife—he smiled amiably.

Stalks of tiny Brussels sprouts and other organically grown foods were carried in and cooked—Elaine believed in nutrition. Then we all sat down at a big table, I beside Bill, who didn't eat very much and soon pushed his chair away. Suddenly he looked at me and asked, "Hey, don't I have a little girl, Lisa?" I told him that indeed he did; his daughter had been a close friend of my daughter's. Now, I said, they were both grown women.

Then Elaine called out across the table, telling Bill to pull his chair up and eat something, for heaven's sake. Very quietly, with a sly look in his eye, he inched his placemat along until it tipped over the table's edge. Lunch, lunch plate, water glass, and silverware all crashed to the floor and shattered, rearranging themselves in a terrible yet somehow thrilling new configuration on the tiles. —PATSY SOUTHGATE

ting political interests ahead of national security. Lake declined further comment on the whole business, as did Sodeberg.

After declaring that he had had enough, the ex-nominee instructed an aide to get him tickets for spring training in Florida. Because of the spring-break stampede, it took several days to make a plane reservation, but, when last heard from, Tony Lake was headed to Fort Myers to cheer for the Red Sox and take solace, perhaps, in watching one national pastime in which most of the dirt stays on the field.

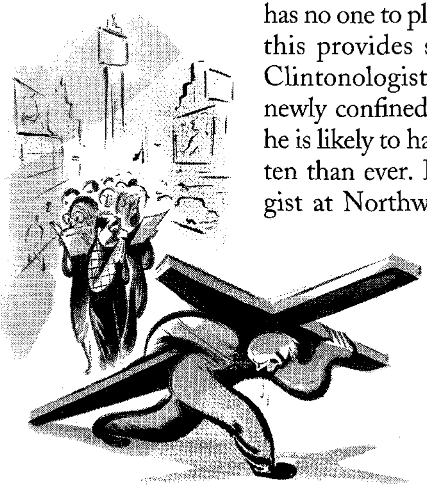
CROSSWALK

WHEN the Reverend James Karpen and two dozen or so of his parishioners set off from the Times Square police station at six o'clock on the evening of Good Friday, they will be bearing a wooden cross that is eight feet tall, is constructed of two four-by-fours, and weighs approximately forty pounds. Along the fifty-block journey, which will end at the United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, on the Upper West Side, they will make eight stops, in a reënactment of Christ's journey to Golgotha—a New York spin on the medieval procession known as the Stations of the Cross.

The contrasts between the Great White Way and the Via Dolorosa, in Jerusalem, where pilgrims have for centuries followed the Biblical route step by step, are not as extreme as they may seem. The station at Broadway and Forty-third Street evokes the spirit of law and order that prompted Pontius Pilate to arrest Jesus; the atmosphere in Times Square on a Friday night at rush hour is certain to echo the raucousness of the crowd that called for the Crucifixion. From there, the latter-day disciples will pause at a park on Fiftieth Street west of Eighth Avenue, a tranquil patch of greenery where they will contemplate Jesus' anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. Then it's on to Columbus Circle and the Coliseum, which, if only in name, recalls the grandeur of Rome. At the sprawling West Sixty-sixth Street headquarters of ABC, the group will read from the Scriptures the unanswered question Pilate addressed to Jesus: "What is truth?" Just around the corner, in front of Martin Luther King, Jr., High School, they will recite the crowd's exhortation

"Crucify him." Outside the I.R.T. entrance at Seventy-second Street, they will repeat Pilate's words to the mob: "Here is the man!" And at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial in Riverside Park the disciples will be reminded of the nobility of losing life for the sake of a larger cause. The only new stop this year will be at the West Side rail yard at Sixty-sixth Street, where a homeless people's shantytown was bulldozed by the police last month to make way for a Donald Trump condominium complex. "It has no particular parallel to the Passion play," Karpen explains, "but it is, in a sense, a scene of modern crucifixion."

The idea for the procession arose three years ago, when several of Karpen's parishioners said they wanted to get a hands-on experience of Easter. Karpen, who is thirty-nine, barrel-chested, and wears a graying ponytail, thought that busy midtown Manhattan would make an interesting setting for the procession. "The first year we carried the cross, a lot of people hurrying home didn't even look," he says. "It must have been like that for Jesus—it was a time when crucifixions were commonplace." The spectacle did, however, get a thumbs-up from various jaded New Yorkers, including prostitutes. The bearers handed out leaflets explaining what they were up to, and quite a few passersby joined them.



As in previous years, the most dramatically charged moment is likely to be at the end. Six years ago, when the ceiling of the nearby B'nai Jeshurun Temple caved in, the radically ecumenical congregation of St. Paul and St. Andrew invited its Conservative Jewish neighbors to share the church building. Karpen, who has been a Methodist minister since 1986 and is in a doctoral program studying the historical roots of Christianity, has worked assiduously to bring the two congregations together. That relationship will be tested on Good Friday, when the Christians drag their cross to the church door just as the Jews inside are finishing Shabbat services. Historically, Good Friday has been an occasion for violence based on the fallacy that "the Jews" killed Jesus. For Rabbi Rolando Matalon, of B'nai Jeshurun, the timing is an occasion for cautious hopefulness. "They are cleansing the ritual of negative associations," he says. "But something like this, if it isn't carefully planned, can become dangerous." It's a point not lost on Karpen, who once led a similar procession to a rally held in protest against the Gulf War, only to have the cross confiscated as a weapon. "As I was telling the cops, 'No, it's a symbol of peace,' the reality of the cross hit home for the first time," he says. "It *is* a dangerous weapon. It certainly was for Jesus."

IT'S IN THE CARDS

Even though Bill Clinton's mother loved her afternoons at the track, the President has never been much of a gambler. He is, however, an inveterate cardplayer, who has computed that the twelve-minute helicopter ride from the South Lawn of the White House to Andrews Air Force Base is just long enough for two hands of hearts. The President saves hearts for groups of three to five, engages in contract rummy when he has two willing partners, and when he has no one to play with deals solitaire. All this provides significant material for Clintonologists—especially now that, newly confined to a sedentary position, he is likely to haul out the cards more often than ever. Bernard Beck, a sociologist at Northwestern who is an expert on why people do the things they do, says, "These games are the choices of a policy wonk rather than of a gunfighter or a gambler. It's not his courage or his daring the President likes to test but his ability to improve his chances through his own wits. A wonderful thing about solitaire is that you're not taking advantage of your opponent. Instead, the President is taking advantage of as many choices as possible."

The Clinton approach to solitaire is one of hedging his bets. According to those who have looked over his shoulder, the President doesn't seize every opportunity to move a card; he likes to keep his options open, allowing a play to pass in the belief that a better chance lies elsewhere in the deck. For instance, he was deep in just such an option the night American Airlines pilots threatened to walk out. Bruce Lindsey, a Presidential aide, recalls that when he approached his boss, shortly after midnight, the President was contemplating a red five that was just sitting there, crying out to be placed on a black six. "It was driving me crazy," Lindsey says. When Lindsey, who is a cutthroat opponent of the President during their long-running hearts competition, suggested the move, the reply came back that the President was waiting for the second red five in his stockpile to turn up, which might uncover the king he desperately needed to keep the game alive.

Contradicting the assumption that solitaire is a game for loners, the President frequently plays it when others are around, no matter whether he's in the Oval Office or the more private Treaty Room. He has also been observed hunched over the nightstand in his dressing room, on the second floor of the White House, lost in solitaire beneath a photograph of Chelsea.

Apparently, he can go for hours, his long fingers arranging the cards in the seven neat piles of Klondike Solitaire (as the most familiar form of the game is called). Over and over, folding and shuffling, the President keeps score in his head, using the Las Vegas rules that allow five dollars for every card stacked up top. His aides have got used to his playing solitaire during briefings; they long ago realized that he can listen and play at the same time. Dick Morris, the former White House shadow, sees the habit as therapeutic. "He has so much intellectual energy that he has to siphon some of it off in order to be able to think," Morris says, speculating that Presidential solitaire may also satisfy "a kind of need to bring order out of chaos and entropy."

The President keeps decks of Bicycles in the Oval Office. On Air Force One, he uses military-issue playing cards. Not even his closest aides have figured out exactly how much time he spends dealing to himself. "Solitaire," Lindsey says thoughtfully, "is a pretty solitary game." ♦

"Tony Lake Is Missing," Jane Mayer; "Crosswalk," Russell Shorto; "It's in the Cards," Karen Ball.

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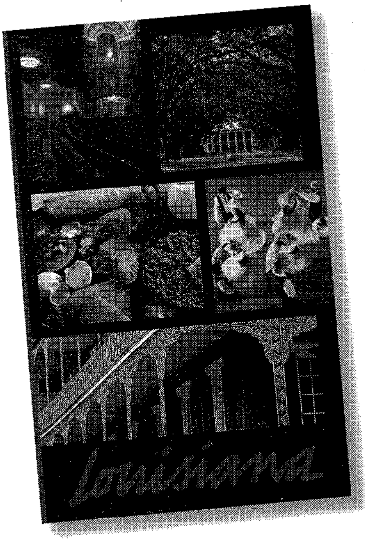

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THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

CHAOS IN HOLLYWOOD

Can science explain why a movie is a hit or a flop?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

ART DE VANY has always been interested in Hollywood. Growing up on a military base in the Mojave Desert during the nineteen-forties, he watched film crews making Westerns in the local canyons. After high school, he played minor-league baseball for the Hollywood Stars, in the Pacific Coast League. ("Lots of the old actors used to attend the games," he recalls fondly.) During the nineteen-sixties, De Vany went to U.C.L.A., where he studied for a Ph.D. in economics. Eventually, he became an academic, specializing in industrial economics. Most of his time was spent analyzing such businesses as energy, airlines, and telecommunications, and he also continued to observe the film industry. The volatile behavior that he saw in the studio system didn't seem to fit any of the theories he studied in graduate school, and this remained a puzzle to him.

A few years ago, De Vany began to wonder if the instability of the film business could be explained by chaos theory, the nascent science that tries to explain such inexplicable natural phenomena as the evolution of the weather, the flow of a river, or the course of a measles epidemic. In a recent *Economic Journal* article, De Vany and a coauthor, David Walls, developed a mathematical model of how filmgoers behave which finally provides a rigorous intellectual basis for the old Hollywood adage "Nobody knows anything." The reason the movie business seems so chaotic, De Vany and Walls declared, is that, scientifically speaking, it *is* chaotic—or borderline chaotic, at least. "The film industry is a complex adaptive system poised between order and chaos," De Vany, a muscular fifty-nine-year-old, with spiky blond hair and a deep tan, said when I dropped by his office, at the University of California, Irvine. A Sun workstation hummed in the background. "People follow simple rules, and this produces complex outcomes," he added.

Chaos theory emerged among physicists during the nineteen-seventies and quickly spread to other fields, such as biology, epidemiology, and economics, where classical scientific models had repeatedly come up short. It tries to demonstrate how a few simple variables can interact to generate results that are so complicated and unpredictable that they appear to be completely random. A good example of a chaotic process is the weather. Fifty years ago, scientists believed that they would eventually be able to forecast a winter storm with certainty. Alas, they were wrong. The earth's atmosphere, it turns out, is inherently unstable, with small changes in one region often transmuting into large changes elsewhere. Consequently, long-term weather forecasts are virtually worthless, and always will be.

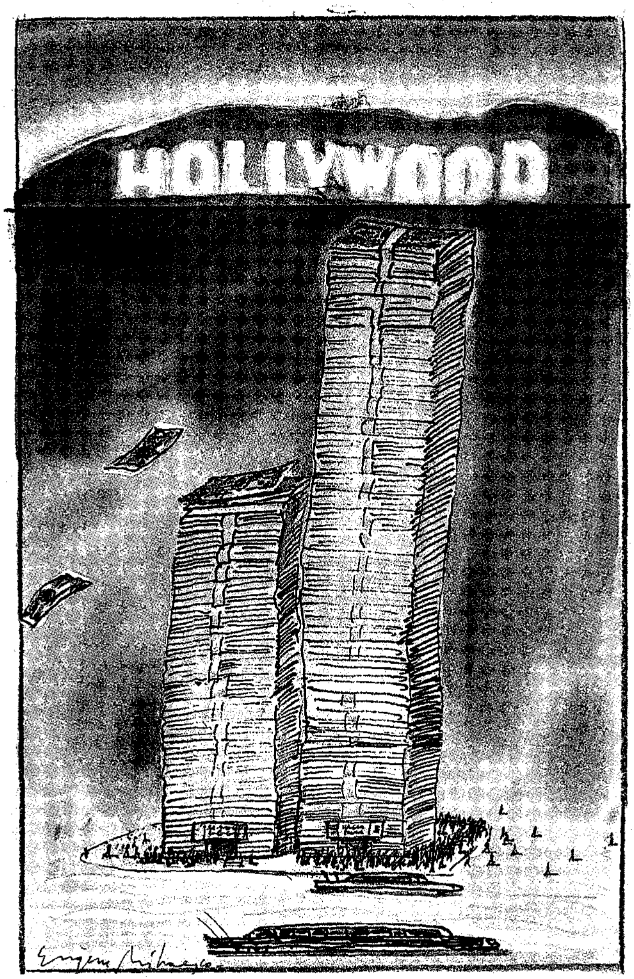
According to De Vany, the chaos of the film industry has to do with the way millions of filmgoers and potential filmgoers exchange information. Since people don't know whether they will like a movie until they see it, they have to rely on what others tell them. If they hear good things—from friends, critics, or whomever—they will probably go and see the film; if they hear bad things, they won't. Economists call this process an information cascade, and information cascades, like droughts, are impossible to forecast. Just as a rainstorm in New Mexico can affect next week's weather in Maine, so the way in which filmgoers react to one movie can determine the fate of dozens of others. Even small differences in what moviegoers prefer can grow into large differences in eventual box-office revenues. "A hit is generated by an information cascade," De Vany and Walls wrote. "A flop is an information bandwagon, too; in this case, the cascade kills the film."

To demonstrate this mathematically, De Vany turned to Albert Einstein. The legendary physicist may appear to be an unlikely source of inspiration for students of the film industry, but De Vany is not your typical *Variety* reader. At Irvine, he teaches a graduate course that combines chaos theory with artificial intelligence, evolution, and game theory. (He is even writing a book applying chaos and evolutionary theory to modern-day physical fitness.) In the nineteen-twenties, Einstein and another scientist, Satyendra Nath Bose, invented a statistical distribution to describe the way gas molecules bouncing around a room tend to gather in balls. The position of the balls cannot be predicted, but they always turn up somewhere, and it was this chaotic clustering process that caught the eye of De Vany and Walls. After examining the box-office records of three hundred movies released between May, 1985, and January, 1986, the two economists became convinced that film viewers were behaving like Einstein's gas molecules.

The evidence showed that audiences were repeatedly attracted to a small number of films. Four releases accounted for a fifth of total box-office revenues over the sample period, and twenty per cent of the films accounted for eighty per cent of the total. Moreover, it was impossible to say why audiences were attracted to certain films and not to others. Some of the high grossers in the sample were big-budget action films, such as "Back to the Future," "Rambo," and "Rocky IV," but there were also cheaper and quirkier movies, such as "Cocoon," "The Goonies," and "White Nights." The only reliable predictor of a film's box-office take was its performance the previous week. Nothing else seemed to matter—not the genre of the film, not its cast, not its budget. "The strong evidence supporting the Bose-Einstein distribution points to the stark uncertainty facing the motion picture industry," De Vany and Walls concluded. "Neither genre nor stars can guarantee success, and a disaster can bankrupt a studio."

DE VANY'S findings have obvious implications for how the film industry operates. Studio executives spend most of their lives trying to predict and control the information cascade; if De Vany is correct, they may be wasting their time. "What it means is that there are no rules, no guarantees," De Vany told me as he rested his white Nikes on his desk. "You just have to try things and be ready to adapt quickly if something works."

A complex, dynamic system of this type cannot be relied upon to exhibit predictable patterns of behavior over extended periods. According to De Vany, this remains true even if the system contains Arnold Schwarzenegger or Mel Gibson and he is earning twenty million dollars for his marquee value. "The notion of a bankable star taking a huge upfront fee—there's a huge risk in that," he said. "A bankable star gets the exhibitors to take the film, so you get lots of screens. But, boy, can you disappear in a hurry if the information flow is negative! Look at 'Last Action Hero.' "



The process through which people choose a movie to see is called the information cascade. And it can kill.

EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

"Last Action Hero" was the 1993 film from Columbia Pictures that featured Arnold Schwarzenegger but nonetheless ended up doing badly at the box office and costing the studio close to twenty million dollars. Its failure, De Vany said, was a good example of how the film studios can come a cropper when they rely on stale formulas—in this case, the big-budget action film—to guide them. "Categorizing a film according to genre gives you no information about how it is going to play," he said. "Most successful films are a complete innovation and cannot be categorized. What was 'Forrest Gump'? After it was made, people started creating genres to put it in."

In insisting that movies fit into rigid categories, and in endlessly trying to mimic earlier successes, the studios ignore the fact that audiences' tastes change quickly, De Vany argued. Last month's big deal is often this month's bore. "There is a ceaseless search for novelty and variety," he said. "That is one of the things that shape this Bose-Einstein process." He went on, "It's like a beauty contest, and we, the audience, are looking for the real beauties."

Much of this sounded plausible, but it was plainly at odds with what is happening fifty miles north of De Vany's office. There the "event movie" is the genre of the moment. At least a dozen such big-budget monsters are scheduled for release this year, of which last month's "Dante's Peak," from Universal, was only the first. In the coming months, we can look forward to "Titanic," "Volcano," and "Starship Troopers" (which is about giant spiders), and also sequels to "Speed," "Jurassic Park," "Alien," and "Batman." Each of these movies will cost more than a hundred million dollars to bring to the screen, and some of them a lot more. I asked De Vany if he was suggesting that the executives who approved these films didn't know what they were doing. "None of them know what they are doing," he replied. "There is no formula, no way of predicting how a film will do. The studios are kidding themselves if they think they are reducing risks in this manner."

Before leaving the Irvine campus, I asked De Vany if he had any practical advice for the people who are charged with running a business that he had just described as unmanageable. He paused, then started laughing. "I wish I had," he said. "I can see movie people lining up to

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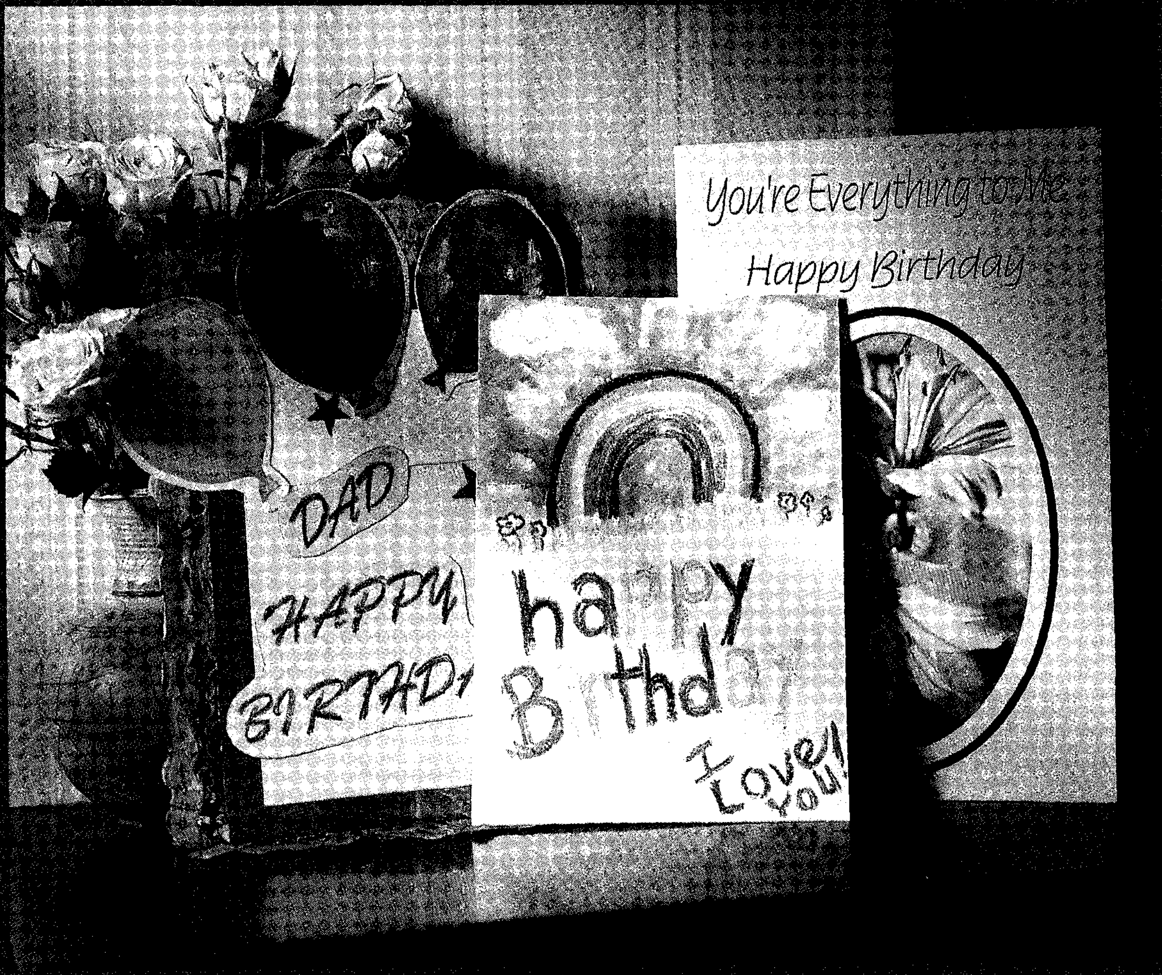
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CONTRAINDICATIONS: Hypersensitivity to any component of this medication. Active liver disease or unexplained, persistent elevations in liver function tests (see **WARNINGS**). *Pregnancy and lactation. Atherosclerosis is a chronic process and discontinuation of lipid-lowering drugs during pregnancy should* have little impact on the outcome of long-term therapy of primary hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol and other products of cholesterol biosynthesis are essential components for fetal development (including synthesis of steroids and cell membranes). Since HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors decrease cholesterol synthesis and possibly the synthesis of other biologically active substances derived from cholesterol, they may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. Therefore, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are contraindicated during pregnancy and in nursing mothers. **Pravastatin should be administered to women of childbearing age only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards.** If the patient becomes pregnant while taking this class of drug, therapy should be discontinued and the patient apprised of the potential hazard to the fetus. **WARNINGS: Liver Enzymes —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. Increases of serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values to more than 3 times the upper limit of normal occurring on 2 or more (not necessarily sequential) occasions have been reported in 1.3% of patients treated with pravastatin in the US over an average period of 18 months. These abnormalities were not associated with cholestasis and did not appear to be related to treatment duration. In those patients in whom these abnormalities were believed to be related to pravastatin and who were discontinued from therapy, the transaminase levels usually fell slowly to pretreatment levels. These biochemical findings are usually asymptomatic although worldwide experience indicates that anorexia, weakness, and/or abdominal pain may also be present in rare patients. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed before the initiation of treatment, at 6 and 12 weeks after initiation of therapy or elevation in dose, and periodically thereafter (e.g., semiannually).** Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored with a second liver function evaluation to confirm the finding and be followed thereafter with frequent liver function tests until the abnormality(ies) return to normal. Should an increase in AST or ALT of three times the upper limit of normal or greater persist, withdrawal of *pravastatin therapy is recommended. Active liver disease or unexplained transaminase elevations are* contraindications to the use of pravastatin (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). Caution should be exercised when pravastatin is administered to patients with a history of liver disease or heavy alcohol ingestion (see **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Pharmacokinetics/Metabolism**). Such patients should be closely monitored, started at the lower end of the recommended dosing range, and titrated to the desired therapeutic effect. ***Skeletal Muscle — Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to*** **myoglobinuria have been reported with pravastatin and other drugs in this class.** Uncomplicated myalgia has also been reported in pravastatin-treated patients (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). Myopathy, defined as muscle aching or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in creatine phosphokinase (CPK) values to greater than 10 times the upper normal limit, was rare (< 0.1%) in pravastatin clinical trials. *Myopathy should be considered in any patient with diffuse myalgias, muscle tenderness or weakness, and/or* marked elevation of CPK. Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Pravastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CPK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. Pravastatin therapy should also be temporarily withheld in any patient experiencing an acute or serious condition predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis, e.g., sepsis; hypotension; major surgery; trauma; severe metabolic, endocrine, or electrolyte disorders; or uncontrolled epilepsy.** The risk of myopathy during treatment with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor is increased with concurrent therapy with either erythromycin, cyclosporine, niacin, or fibrates. However, neither myopathy nor significant increases in CPK levels have been observed in three reports involving a total of 100 post-transplant patients (24 renal and 76 cardiac) treated for up to two years concurrently with pravastatin 10-40 mg and cyclosporine. Some of these patients also received other concomitant immunosuppressive therapies. In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in cardiac transplant *patients receiving cyclosporine. Further, in clinical trials involving small numbers of patients who were treated* concurrently with pravastatin and niacin, there were no reports of myopathy. Also, myopathy was not reported in a trial of combination pravastatin (40 mg/day) and gemfibrozil (1200 mg/day), although 4 of 75 patients on the combination showed marked CPK elevations versus one of 73 patients receiving placebo. There was a trend toward more frequent CPK elevations and patient withdrawals due to musculoskeletal symptoms in the group receiving combined treatment as compared with the groups receiving placebo, gemfibrozil, or pravastatin monotherapy (see **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions**). **The use of fibrates alone may occasionally be associated with myopathy. The combined use of pravastatin and fibrates should be avoided unless the benefit of further alterations in lipid levels is likely to outweigh the increased risk of this drug combination. PRECAUTIONS: General —** Pravastatin may elevate creatinine phosphokinase and transaminase levels (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). This should be considered in the differential diagnosis *of chest pain in a patient on therapy with pravastatin. Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia.* Pravastatin has not been evaluated in patients with rare homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia. In this group of patients, it has been reported that HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are less effective because the patients lack functional LDL receptors. *Renal Insufficiency.* A single 20 mg oral dose of pravastatin was administered to 24 patients with varying degrees of renal impairment (as determined by creatinine clearance). *No effect was observed on the pharmacokinetics of pravastatin or its 3α-hydroxy isomeric* metabolite (SQ 31,906). A small increase was seen in mean AUC values and half-life ($t^{1}/_{2}$) for the inactive enzymatic ring hydroxylation metabolite (SQ 31,945). Given this small sample size, the dosage administered, and the degree of individual variability, patients with renal impairment who are receiving pravastatin should be closely monitored. **Information for Patients —** Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, *particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever.* **Drug Interactions —** *Immunosuppressive Drugs, Gemfibrozil, Niacin (Nicotinic Acid), Erythromycin:* See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle.** *Antipyrine:* Since concomitant administration of pravastatin had no effect on the clearance of antipyrine, interactions with other drugs metabolized via the same hepatic cytochrome isozymes are not expected. *Cholestyramine/Colestipol:* Concomitant administration resulted in an approximately 40 to 50% decrease in the mean AUC of pravastatin. However, when pravastatin was administered 1 hour before or 4 hours after cholestyramine or 1 hour before colestipol and a standard meal, there was no clinically significant decrease in bioavailability or therapeutic effect. (See **DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: Concomitant Therapy.**) *Warfarin:* In a study involving 10 healthy male subjects given pravastatin and warfarin concomitantly for 6 days, bioavailability parameters at steady state for pravastatin (parent compound) were not altered. Pravastatin did not alter the plasma protein-binding of warfarin. Concomitant dosing did increase the AUC and Cmax of warfarin but did not produce any changes in its anticoagulant action (i.e., no increase was seen in mean prothrombin time after 6 days of concomitant therapy). However, bleeding and extreme prolongation of prothrombin time has been reported with another drug in this class. Patients receiving warfarin-type anticoagulants should have their prothrombin times closely monitored when pravastatin is initiated or the dosage of pravastatin is changed. *Cimetidine:* The $AUC_{0\text{-}12\ hr}$ for pravastatin when given with cimetidine was not significantly different from the AUC for pravastatin when given alone. A significant difference was observed between the AUC's for pravastatin when given with cimetidine compared to when administered with antacid. *Digoxin:* In a crossover trial involving 18 healthy male subjects given pravastatin and digoxin concurrently for 9 days, the bioavailability parameters of digoxin were not affected. The AUC of pravastatin tended to increase, but the overall bioavailability of pravastatin plus its metabolites SQ 31,906 and SQ 31,945 was not altered. *Cyclosporine:* Some investigators have measured cyclosporine levels in patients on pravastatin, and to date, these results indicate no clinically meaningful elevations in cyclosporine levels. In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in cardiac transplant patients receiving cyclosporine. *Gemfibrozil:* In a crossover study in 20 healthy male volunteers given concomitant single doses of pravastatin and gemfibrozil, there was a significant decrease in urinary excretion and protein binding of pravastatin. In addition, there was a significant increase in AUC, Cmax, and Tmax for the pravastatin metabolite SQ 31,906. Combination therapy with pravastatin and gemfibrozil is generally not recommended. In interaction studies with *aspirin, antacids* (1 hour prior to PRAVACHOL), *cimetidine, nicotinic acid,* or *probucol*, no statistically significant differences in bioavailability were seen when PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) was administered. *Other Drugs:* During clinical trials, no noticeable drug interactions were reported when PRAVACHOL was added to: diuretics, antihypertensives, digitalis, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, beta-blockers, or nitroglycerin. **Endocrine Function —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors interfere with cholesterol synthesis and lower circulating cholesterol levels and, as such, might theoretically blunt adrenal or gonadal steroid hormone production. Results of clinical trials with pravastatin in males and post-menopausal females were inconsistent with regard to possible effects of the drug on basal steroid hormone levels. In a study of 21 males, the mean testosterone response to human chorionic gonadotropin was significantly reduced ($p < 0.004$) after 16 weeks of treatment with 40 mg of pravastatin. However, the percentage of patients showing a ≥ 50% rise in plasma testosterone after *human chorionic gonadotropin stimulation did not change significantly after therapy in these patients.* The effects of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors on spermatogenesis and fertility have not been studied in adequate numbers of patients. The effects, if any, of pravastatin on the pituitary-gonadal axis in pre-menopausal females are unknown. Patients treated with pravastatin who display clinical evidence of endocrine dysfunction should be evaluated appropriately. Caution should also be exercised if an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor or other agent used to lower cholesterol levels is administered to patients also receiving other drugs (e.g., ketoconazole, spironolactone, cimetidine) that may diminish the levels or activity of steroid hormones. **CNS Toxicity —** CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhage and edema and mononuclear cell infiltration of perivascular spaces, were seen in dogs treated with pravastatin at a dose of 25 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced a plasma drug level about 50 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking 40 mg/day. Similar CNS vascular lesions have been observed with several other drugs in this class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in clinically normal dogs in a dose-dependent fashion starting at 60 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced mean plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose (as measured by total enzyme inhibitory activity). This same drug also produced vestibulocochlear Wallerian-like degeneration and retinal ganglion cell chromatolysis in dogs treated for 14 weeks at 180 mg/kg/day, a dose which resulted in a mean plasma drug level similar to that seen with the 60 mg/kg/day dose. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility —** In a 2-year study in rats fed pravastatin at doses of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg body weight, there was an increased incidence of hepatocellular carcinomas in males at the highest dose ($p < 0.01$). Although rats were given up to 125 times the human dose (HD) on a mg/kg body weight basis, serum drug levels were only 6 to 10 times higher than those measured in humans given 40 mg pravastatin as measured by AUC. The oral administration of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg (producing plasma drug levels approximately 0.5 to 5.0 times the human drug levels at 40 *mg) of pravastatin to mice for 22 months resulted in a statistically significant increase in the incidence of* malignant lymphomas in treated females when all treatment groups were pooled and compared to controls ($p < 0.05$). The incidence was not dose-related and male mice were not affected. A chemically similar drug in this class was administered to mice for 72 weeks at 25, 100, and 400 mg/kg body weight, which resulted in mean serum drug levels approximately 3, 15, and 33 times higher than the mean human serum drug concentration (as total inhibitory activity) after a 40 mg oral dose. Liver carcinomas were significantly increased in high-dose females and mid- and high-dose males, with a maximum incidence of 90 percent in males. The incidence of adenomas of the liver was significantly increased in mid- and high-dose females. Drug treatment also significantly increased the incidence of lung adenomas in mid- and high-dose males and females. Adenomas of the eye Harderian gland (a gland of the eye of rodents) were significantly higher in high-dose mice than in controls. No evidence of mutagenicity was observed *in vitro*, with or without rat-liver metabolic activation, in the following studies: microbial mutagen tests, using mutant strains of *Salmonella typhimurium* or *Escherichia coli*; a forward mutation assay in L5178Y TK +/- mouse lymphoma cells; a chromosomal aberration test in hamster cells; and a gene conversion assay using *Saccharomyces cerevisiae.* In addition, there was no evidence of mutagenicity in either a dominant lethal test in mice or a micronucleus test in mice. In a study in rats, with daily doses up to 500 mg/kg, pravastatin did not produce any adverse effects on fertility or general reproductive performance. However, in a study with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, there was decreased fertility in male rats treated for 34 weeks at 25 mg/kg body weight, although this effect was not observed in a subsequent fertility study when this same dose was administered for 11 weeks (the entire cycle of spermatogenesis, including epididymal maturation). In rats treated with this same reductase inhibitor at 180 mg/kg/day, seminiferous tubule degeneration (necrosis and loss of spermatogenic epithelium) was observed. Although not seen with pravastatin, two similar drugs in this class caused drug-related testicular atrophy, decreased spermatogenesis, spermatocytic degeneration, and giant cell formation in dogs. The clinical significance of these findings is unclear. **Pregnancy: Pregnancy Category X. —** See **CONTRAINDICATIONS**. *Safety in pregnant women has not been established.* Pravastatin was not teratogenic in rats at doses up to 1000 mg/kg daily or in rabbits at doses of up to 50 mg/kg daily. These doses resulted in 20x (rabbit) or 240x (rat) the human exposure based on surface area (mg/meter^2). However, in studies with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, skeletal malformations were observed in rats and mice. There has been one report of severe congenital bony deformity, tracheo-esophageal fistula, and anal atresia (Vater *association) in a baby born to a woman who took another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor with* dextroamphetamine sulfate during the first trimester of pregnancy. PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) should be administered to women of child-bearing potential only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards. If the woman becomes pregnant while taking PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium), it should be discontinued and the patient advised again as to the potential hazards to the fetus. **Nursing Mothers —** *A small amount of pravastatin is excreted in human breast milk. Because of* the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, women taking PRAVACHOL should not nurse (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). **Pediatric Use —** Safety and effectiveness in individuals less than 18 years old have not been established. Hence, treatment in patients less than 18 years old is not recommended at this time. **ADVERSE REACTIONS:** Pravastatin is generally well tolerated; adverse reactions have usually been mild and transient. In 4-month long placebo-controlled trials, 1.7% of pravastatin-treated patients and 1.2% of placebo-treated patients were discontinued from treatment because of adverse experiences attributed to study drug therapy; this difference was not statistically significant. In long-term studies, the most common reasons for discontinuation were asymptomatic serum transaminase increases and mild, non-specific gastrointestinal complaints. During clinical trials the overall incidence of adverse events in the elderly was not different from the incidence observed in younger patients. **Adverse Clinical Events —** All adverse clinical events (regardless of attribution) reported in more than 2% of pravastatin-treated patients in the placebo-controlled trials are identified in the table below; also shown are the percentages of patients in *whom these medical events were believed to be related or possibly related to the drug:*

	All Events		**Events Attributed to Study Drug**	
Body System/Event	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**
Cardiovascular				
Cardiac Chest Pain	4.0	3.4	0.1	0.0
Dermatologic Rash	4.0*	1.1	1.3	0.9
Gastrointestinal				
Nausea/Vomiting	7.3	7.1	2.9	3.4
Diarrhea	6.2	5.6	2.0	1.9
Abdominal Pain	5.4	6.9	2.0	3.9
Constipation	4.0	7.1	2.4	5.1
Flatulence	3.3	3.6	2.7	3.4
Heartburn	2.9	1.9	2.0	0.7
General				
Fatigue	3.8	3.4	1.9	1.0
Chest Pain	3.7	1.9	0.3	0.2
Influenza	2.4*	0.7	0.0	0.0
Musculoskeletal				
Localized Pain	10.0	9.0	1.4	1.5
Myalgia	2.7	1.0	0.6	0.0
Nervous System				
Headache	6.2	3.9	1.7*	0.2
Dizziness	3.3	3.2	1.0	0.5
Renal/Genitourinary				
Urinary Abnormality	2.4	2.9	0.7	1.2
Respiratory				
Common Cold	7.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
Rhinitis	4.0	4.1	0.1	0.0
Cough	2.6	1.7	0.1	0.0

*Statistically significantly different from placebo.

In the Pravastatin Primary Prevention Study (West of Scotland Coronary Prevention Study) (see **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Clinical Studies**) involving 6595 patients treated with PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) ($N = 3302$) or placebo ($n = 3293$) the adverse event profile in the pravastatin group was comparable to that of the placebo group over the median 4.8 years of the study. The following effects have been reported with *drugs in this class; not all the effects listed below have necessarily been associated with pravastatin therapy:* *Skeletal:* myopathy, rhabdomyolysis, arthralgia. *Neurological:* dysfunction of certain cranial nerves (including alteration of taste, impairment of extra-ocular movement, facial paresis), tremor, vertigo, memory loss, paresthesia, peripheral neuropathy, peripheral nerve palsy, anxiety, insomnia, depression. *Hypersensitivity Reactions:* An apparent hypersensitivity syndrome has been reported rarely which has included one or more of the following features: anaphylaxis, angioedema, lupus erythematous-like syndrome, polymyalgia rheumatica, dermatomyositis, vasculitis, purpura, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, hemolytic anemia, positive ANA, ESR increase, eosinophilia, arthritis, arthralgia, urticaria, asthenia, photosensitivity, fever, chills, flushing, malaise, dyspnea, toxic epidermal necrolysis, erythema multiforme, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome. *Gastrointestinal:* pancreatitis, hepatitis, including chronic active hepatitis, cholestatic jaundice, fatty change in liver, and, rarely, cirrhosis, fulminant hepatic necrosis, and hepatoma; anorexia, vomiting. *Skin:* alopecia, pruritus. A variety of skin changes (e.g., nodules, discoloration, dryness of skin/mucous membranes, changes to hair/nails) have been reported. *Reproductive:* gynecomastia, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction. *Eye: progression of cataracts (lens opacities), ophthalmoplegia. Laboratory Abnormalities*: elevated transaminases, alkaline phosphatase, and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities. **Laboratory Test Abnormalities —** *Increases in serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values and CPK have been observed* (see **WARNINGS**). Transient, asymptomatic eosinophilia has been reported. Eosinophil counts usually returned to normal despite continued therapy. Anemia, thrombocytopenia, and leukopenia have been reported with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors. **Concomitant Therapy —** Pravastatin has been administered concurrently with cholestyramine, colestipol, nicotinic acid, probucol and gemfibrozil. Preliminary data suggest that the addition of either probucol or gemfibrozil to therapy with lovastatin or pravastatin is **not** associated with greater reduction in LDL-cholesterol than that achieved with lovastatin or pravastatin alone. No adverse reactions unique to the combination or in addition to those previously reported for each drug alone have been reported. Myopathy and rhabdomyolysis (with or without acute renal failure) have been reported when another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor was used in combination with immunosuppressive drugs, gemfibrozil, erythromycin, or lipid-lowering doses of nicotinic acid. Concomitant therapy with HMG-CoA *reductase inhibitors and these* agents is generally not recommended. (See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle** and **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions.**) **OVERDOSAGE:** To date, there are two reported cases of overdosage with pravastatin, both of which were asymptomatic and not associated with clinical laboratory abnormalities. If an overdose occurs, it should be treated symptomatically and supportive measures should be instituted as required.

CAUTION: Federal (USA) law prohibits dispensing without prescription.

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Revised July 1996
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give me big consulting contracts if I can lie and say, 'I know what to do here.' But the answer is I don't."

SHORTLY after talking with De Vany, I drove to the Twentieth Century Fox lot, in Century City, where I met Bill Mechanic, the chairman of the studio, and Peter Chernin, Mechanic's predecessor, who was recently promoted to president of Fox's parent company, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. If anybody could claim to have tamed the chaos of the studio system, then maybe they could, I thought. The two men have turned Fox from a loss-making Hollywood also-ran into a thriving film factory that has enjoyed a string of hits, "Mrs. Doubtfire," "Speed," and "Independence Day" prominent among them.

When I arrived at Fox's Art Deco executive building, Mechanic was on the telephone discussing what appeared to be a rather less successful venture.

"Look, I'm not an autocrat, I just think this movie has a hard time being a commercial picture," he said.

There was a pause; then he continued, "The movie is good, don't get me wrong. This is a good movie. But it needed to be great to work. I don't think we quite hit that mark."

Mechanic's face was blank as he listened. "I'm not trying to be discouraging," he said. "I think I'm being dispassionate about this. If there is a chance to make money with this movie, we'll be behind you all the way."

This time, the silence was longer.

"August is just not realistic," Mechanic said, the first hint of emotion creeping into his voice. "There's already too much out there. We've got another movie we might go with in August if it's great: 'Great Expectations,' with Ethan Hawke, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Bob De Niro. If it's not great, I wouldn't go near it with a ten-foot pole."

At forty-six, Mechanic doesn't look like a Hollywood slicker. His brown hair was unkempt, he has a mustache, and his tie was loose at the collar. He doesn't sound like a slicker, either. "The thing about this business is you get humble," he told me after he got off the phone. "If you know anything, it's very hard to be arrogant, because the next day you've made mistakes. Success is illusory."

This seemed almost like an endorsement of chaos theory, but Mechanic doesn't look at things in those terms. Like all studio heads, he thinks of himself as an investor. "It's always been a risky industry, but the risks have increased and the returns haven't," he told me. "What's happened is that you've had fewer winners. It's almost like a Third World country. The winners live in palaces, and the losers, as far as studios go, live in slums."

The reasons for this relate directly to De Vany's findings. Since the information cascade leads to a situation in which a fifth of movies garner four-fifths of the revenues, eighty per cent of films are destined to lose money. And recently the loss-makers have got a lot more expensive. Between 1980 and 1996, the average cost of producing and marketing a Hollywood film rose from thirteen million seven hundred thousand dollars to fifty-nine million seven hundred thousand, an increase of four hundred and thirty-five per cent. Major studios typically release between fifteen and twenty movies a year. At sixty million dollars a movie, they can quickly run up hundreds of millions of dollars in losses if they don't have any hits. (This was the misfortune that befell Sony, which took a two-billion-seven-hundred-million-dollar writeoff on its investment five years after it bought Columbia and TriStar.)

Confronted with this situation, Chernin and Mechanic came up with a formula that has become a mantra for studio executives. "We basically got out of the 'middle-class' picture," Mechanic explained. "The movie that costs twenty-five to forty million dollars to produce, that has a middle-range star and a middle-range idea—that is the most difficult to make work." Peter Chernin, a dark-haired and soft-spoken forty-five-year-old whose office is just down the hall from Mechanic's, was more specific. He cited four films from last year—"The Juror," "The Fan," "City Hall," and "Chain Reaction"—as examples of the sort of mid-range movie that no longer makes commercial sense.

"The reason the middle used to work is that there used to be fewer movies," Chernin told me. "When you lived in a world where there were one or two movies being released each weekend, then you would say, 'I've seen everything else, so I might as well see this.' Movies used to stick around." A few numbers illustrate Chernin's point. In 1985, the Hollywood studios released a hundred and fifty-three films. Ten years later, the total was two hundred and thirty-four. "In a world where there are four or five movies released every single weekend, you'd better have something you can open," Chernin

"Those? They're the ponytails of smart-aleck college boys who couldn't cut the mustard."

"Congratulations! It's a Beanie Baby."

• •

said. "You don't have a chance to build. You either open big and hang around for a while, or you drop half your business the next weekend and get replaced in the movie theatres the following weekend."

From the point of view of chaos theory, Chernin's argument suggests that the information cascade has become even less predictable than it used to be. With more and more films vying for attention from the media and the public, the range of possible outcomes in the Bose-Einstein model rises exponentially, and the chance of a movie's being swept aside before it has time to find an audience rises with it. This explains why the need to "open" a movie has come to dominate Hollywood, almost to the exclusion of all else. The veteran producer and studio executive Robert Evans captured this attitude when, comparing movies to parachutes, he said, "If it doesn't open, you are dead."

De Vany agreed that a film's opening is important in determining which way the information cascade breaks, but he was skeptical about how much control the studios really have. "They can put a film on the screen, but they can't make it open," he told me. Understandably, Mechanic and Chernin were somewhat more optimistic. Despite De Vany's evidence to the contrary, they believe there are at least two ways to influence the information cascade: put a big star in the right picture, and turn the film into an event.

I didn't meet anybody in Hollywood who questioned the idea of paying an actor twenty million dollars for two months' work. "Opening big is less a function of quality than of marketability," Chernin told me. "That is why we all overpay the stars, because they give you a certain amount of marketability."

"Even with the crazy salaries, it makes sense to put the right star in the right vehicle," Mechanic said. "The problem is that if you don't get one of the big guys you go to somebody else, who is not such a big box-office draw, and he says, 'I'm getting five offers—if you want me here is my price.' "

According to Mechanic, there are six actors who can be relied on to boost box-office revenues: Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Tom Hanks, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and John Travolta. I asked him to cite some recent films in which casting had made a big difference. " 'Ransom' without Mel Gibson is a very good movie that probably does a fraction of the business, 'Jerry Maguire' without Tom Cruise likewise," he replied. "They are not big conceptual pictures. They rely on the story and the characters. If you do that, you rely on the people who play them."

For most studio executives, the problem with big stars is not that they charge so much but that among them they can do only about fifteen or twenty films a year. ("If Tom Hanks wanted to do the phone book, we'd probably do the phone book," Mechanic told me.) Since the studios release more than two hundred movies a year, the question becomes how to manipulate the information cascade without big stars.

A model answer was provided by Fox's marketing of "Independence Day," which is now the second-highest-grossing film of all time. The movie was pitched to Fox by its producer-director team, Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich. Their concept for the film couldn't have been simpler—aliens attack Earth, and Earth fights back—but that was also its attraction. "We thought, Here's a big idea, and we haven't seen this sort of movie in the longest time," Mechanic told me.

Since the film didn't have any major stars—Jeff Goldblum was the biggest—Mechanic, who was then in charge of marketing Fox's films, knew that it needed something to rise above the clutter. "We said, 'We're going to have to start early, and we need to start with impact,' " he recalled. Somebody in Fox's marketing department had an idea: Why not broadcast a trailer from the film during the Super Bowl, the highest-rated television event of the year? If it had worked for Budweiser and Coca-Cola, why not do it with a film, even if the release date was more than six months away?

The trailer, which showed the White House being blown up, instantly turned "Independence Day" into a media phenomenon and staked its claim to the July 4th weekend, one of the most valuable release dates in the calendar. "We caught fire," Mechanic recalled. "All of a sudden, here was this unique thing, and it became part of the culture."

This statement should be put into context. Fox spent about thirty million dollars on marketing "Independence Day" in the United States, and another thirty million abroad. Nonetheless, as Mechanic freely conceded, what really made the movie was all the free publicity it received in the media. On the wall of his office, he has framed copies of *Time* and *Newsweek* covers from the week of July 4th, when the film opened. "ALIENS HAVE LANDED," blared *Time*. "OUT THERE," echoed *Newsweek*. "First time in history that a film has made both covers," Mechanic said, smiling.

Of course, to prove that the information cascade can be controlled, Mechanic and Chernin would need to repeat their "Independence Day" success. As it happens, they have just done so, with the rerelease of "Star Wars," "The Empire Strikes Back," and "Return of the Jedi," three of the original event movies. Fox executives admit that the rapturous reception the "Star Wars" films have received has surprised even them, but the success was based on Mechanic's formula for "eventizing" a film. "The key thing is the idea. You can't do it unless you have the goods," he said.

The "event" concept will receive its biggest challenge later this year, when Fox and Paramount will jointly release "Titanic." James Cameron is shooting it in Mexico, and there is talk in Hollywood that the production cost alone could reach the two-hundred-million-dollar mark. Mechanic denied this, but he refused to give out any figures. "It is not on budget, but it's not a runaway," he said with a straight face. With a number of would-be blockbusters forthcoming from rival studios, Mechanic and Chernin are well aware of the risks they are running. "What I'm betting on is that in a world in which audiences can see Batman and dinosaurs and floods and volcanoes, a really compelling drama, dressed up with huge spectacle, will feel fresh and original and different to them," Chernin told me.

It occurred to me that Chernin probably had the unenviable task of explaining to Rupert Murdoch why he should spend a hundred million dollars on a film that has no big stars and might close in four weeks. "The cost of making these event movies is getting really frightening," Chernin conceded. "But the flip side is that the alternative is seemingly worse: either sit on the sideline and do nothing or try and compete with a non-event movie, in which case you get killed. Just killed."

AFTER Fox, my next stop was Universal City. Frank Biondi, sitting in a fourteenth-floor corner office, looked like a refugee from the Four Seasons, his gold cufflinks glistening in the sunlight. A fifty-two-year-old New Yorker, he moved West last year, when the Bronfmans, of Seagram, hired him to run the troubled business that they had bought from Matsushita for close to six billion dollars. Many people on Wall Street thought the Bronfmans were crazy to buy Universal, but hiring Biondi was seen as a smart move. "If anybody can make sense out of the madness of the film industry, it is Frank," a banker told me.

After getting me a mineral water and himself a Diet Coke, Biondi began, "The economics are more difficult than they have been in the last twenty years—possibly the last forty or fifty years, when television began having an impact on the motion-picture business." Since none of the film studios are stand-alone companies, it is difficult to figure out exactly how they are doing, but Biondi reckoned that profit margins had been cut in half since the nineteen-seventies. Over all, he estimated, the film industry's rate of return on capital invested is about three per cent—less than can be earned in a money-market account. Since the bulk of the profits go to one or two studios, most people are losing money.

This fall in profits occurred despite a rapid increase in film-industry revenues thanks to the growth of home video and pay television. "People thought, Volume is way up, so what if our margins slip," Biondi said. "The problem is the sacrifice was too great."

When Biondi arrived in Universal City, he did what any Harvard M.B.A. (Class of 1968) would do: he ordered up some numbers. Specifically, he asked his staff to go back through the studio's accounts and figure out which types of films had made money over the last ten years: those with small budgets (under twenty million dollars), medium budgets (twenty to forty million), or big budgets (over forty million). The figures were surprising, at least to Biondi. "They clearly showed that the over-forty-million-dollar movies had the highest absolute return and the highest return on capital," he recalled. "The lowest-return movies were the twenty-to-forty-million-dollar films. Of course, eighty-five per cent of our projects fell into that category."

Biondi concluded that the film industry was not as chaotic as it appeared. "There is a distribution of success in the movie business that can be impacted by management," he said. From now on, he decided, Universal Pictures would follow Fox's lead and concentrate on cheap flicks and what he termed "impact movies." For a money man, he seemed remarkably sanguine about the prospect of spending a hundred million dollars to put a movie on the screen. "Of course, there are 'Waterworld's," he told me calmly. "But that's just part of the game."

Despite the warning about profitability, Biondi seemed more optimistic about the studios' future than most people in Hollywood. I suspected that that might be because he hadn't lived there long, but he said that his optimism was based on a number of trends that in his view would intensify over the next few years. "Look at 'Jerry Maguire,' " he said. "Five or six years ago, it would have been cast with Tom Cruise, but the female lead would have been Debra Winger, the athlete would have been Denzel Washington, and the director would have been Sydney Pollack. Today, they still go with the box-office champion, but there are relative unknowns in the rest of the roles."

This implies that the studios have finally realized that only a few actors can influence the information cascade, so it doesn't make sense to pay big salaries to the second tier. Biondi claimed that the process will eventually lead to a situation like that at the National Basketball Association, where the stars earn a fortune but the rest of the league is made up of journeymen, who are, relatively speaking, modestly paid. "You can survive the law of supply and demand for only so long," he said.

Another factor working in the studios' favor, Biondi added, is a shift in the balance of power away from the talent agencies, and especially the Creative Artists Agency since the departure of its founders, Michael Ovitz, Bill Haber, and Ron Meyer (who now works alongside Biondi at Universal). "C.A.A. did a very clever thing," he said. "If you look at it from a pure commodities perspective, they cornered the market for a rare commodity—talent. If you control sixty or seventy per cent of the market for a rare commodity, you are going to sell it at a better price than if there are five players, each of whom has fourteen or fifteen per cent of the market." Although C.A.A. is still powerful, Biondi said, "on a relative basis, it is not quite as strong as it was."

If the film industry were in really bad shape, Biondi pointed out, it would have trouble attracting capital, but it doesn't. Only last year, Fox raised a billion-dollar loan through Citibank to finance future film production. And despite the experiences of Sony and Matsushita, there are still plenty of Asians and Europeans who are willing to pay big to enter the Hollywood game. "If you are sitting in my seat, you can, to an extent, hedge your bets by bringing them in as partners," Biondi said.

One more thing working in the studios' favor from a financial perspective, Biondi argued, is that their parent companies are getting more aggressive. "Seagram didn't say to me, 'We don't care if we make money.' Quite the opposite," he said. "Ted Turner's in there at Time Warner banging away. Disney clearly took remedial action, because they weren't happy with the results. You run the numbers and you can't miss the message. We are all seeing the same results."

As I listened to Biondi making his case, I began to have doubts about chaos theory. He seemed to have a reasoned answer to everything. Maybe the studios really were regaining control of their fates, I thought. Then I saw "Daylight."

A year and a half ago ago, Universal Pictures surprised Hollywood by signing a three-picture deal with Sylvester Stallone for sixty million dollars. Because Ron Meyer had been Stallone's agent at C.A.A., some unkind observers suggested that this was some sort of sweetheart deal. Actually, it was perfectly in line with Biondi's argument for impact movies. Stallone has a proven track record, and "Daylight" was a big-budget thriller, but unfortunately it didn't take off. Although it opened at Christmastime, it grossed only thirty-three million dollars in the United States.

When I asked Biondi about "Daylight," he started talking about how well the film was doing overseas (where it has taken in more than a hundred million dollars). I pressed him on whether he believed the Stallone deal, which covers his next three Universal pictures, was a smart one. "To be honest, there's just no percentage in describing deals with your talent as smart, supersmart, or not so smart," he said. "We did the deal because we believed it made sense. Would we have liked this picture to have done better? Would *he* have liked the picture to have done better? Absolutely." Biondi paused. For the first time his brow became furrowed. "I'm a little puzzled why it didn't do so well," he said. "I thought it was a pretty good action picture."

A WEEK after interviewing De Vany, I received a letter from him saying that he did have some tips for the unfortunate studio executives after all. "The best advice one could give the industry that is consistent with my research is: make good movies and the audience will come," he wrote. "It is the 'Field of Dreams' solution."

That is an appealing idea, but it isn't one that Hollywood people have much time for. "The argument that says 'Don't worry, if it's quality they'll find it' is just not true," Peter Chernin said. His colleague, Mechanic, agreed. "From my background alone, I would love to do great movies," he said. "There is a tyranny to the cost structure. The tyranny is that in the big-picture business it forces mediocrity." Before becoming a studio executive, Mechanic wrote a dissertation about Frank Capra and Preston Sturges. I asked how he would react if a director came to see him and proposed a film about a struggling building-and-loan manager who is visited by an angel. "With us, it could only get made in one of two ways," he replied. "With a real movie star—say, Tom Cruise—who says he really wants to do it. Or with Ewan McGregor for fifteen million."

Two years ago, Fox, following this logic, refused to finance "The English Patient," a film that has been nominated for twelve Academy Awards. "We loved the movie," Mechanic said. "I thought it was an absolutely brilliant script, but it was too expensive for us to invest in, because, ultimately, our job is to return a profit." (He didn't say so, but it is well known that Fox also wanted to substitute Demi Moore for Kristin Scott Thomas as the female lead.)

In the creative community, of course, the studio executives' financial logic does not go down well. "They are full of shit," Saul Zaentz, the producer of "The English Patient," screamed on the phone to me. "You mean if somebody came to them with 'Dr. Zhivago' or 'Lawrence of Arabia' they would say, 'It's a bad cost structure.' But they can make a crappy picture for a lot of money—that's good business sense?" Unfortunately, it may well be, and a glance at the box-office figures explains why. Despite its Oscar nominations, "The English Patient" has grossed just sixty million dollars at the box office in the United States. "Fargo" and "Shine," two other Academy Award contenders, have taken in only twenty-four and thirty million respectively. Meanwhile, "Twister" and "Mission: Impossible" have grossed two hundred and forty-one million and a hundred and eighty-one million in the United States. As for "Independence Day," its domestic box office was just over three hundred million and its foreign box-office tally is close to four hundred ninety million dollars, and it has generated five hundred million dollars more in so-called ancillary revenue, which includes videocassettes and television rights. All told, Chernin said, Fox stands to earn upward of three hundred million dollars in profits from "Independence Day."

Where the next blockbuster will come from is impossible to predict—a fact illustrated by the recent experience of Mark Canton. Last September, Canton was fired from his position as head of Sony Pictures movie studios. His five-year reign encompassed a number of high-profile turkeys—"Last Action Hero," "I'll Do Anything," and "The Fan" among them—and was generally considered a disaster. But since Canton left Sony, a number of films that he developed have done better than expected. They include "Beverly Hills Ninja," "The Mirror Has Two Faces," and, most notably, "Jerry Maguire," produced by Sony's TriStar Pictures. Canton was criticized when he agreed to guarantee Tom Cruise twenty million dollars for appearing in a film about a sports agent, but the movie has turned into the biggest hit in TriStar's history, with a domestic gross of more than a hundred and forty million. When I spoke to Canton recently, he seemed somewhat shaken by his experience. "Hollywood is a place of great irony at all times," he said. ♦

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THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

THE OUTSIDER

James Fallows is a thinker and a writer who is not beloved of the Washington media establishment. Is he just what U.S. News & World Report needs?

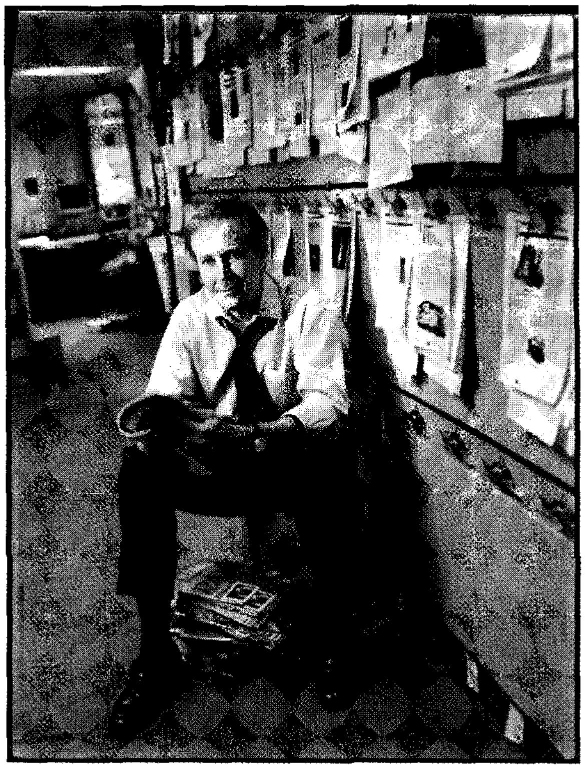
BY KURT ANDERSEN

FORTY-EIGHT hours after Dr. Ian Wilmut, of Scotland's Roslin Institute, announced his breakthrough, the only questions at *Time* and *Newsweek* were whether to use images of sheep (*Time*) or people (*Newsweek*) on the cover and just how large a proportion of each magazine the cloning story would consume. "It is a classic news-magazine story in the very best sense," Rick Smith, *Newsweek's* president and editor-in-chief, told me a few days later. "There aren't that many mandatory covers a year. It seems to me this is definitely in that category."

Meanwhile, down in Washington, James Fallows, who has been the editor of *U.S. News & World Report* since September, was phoning Mortimer Zuckerman, who owns the magazine, in New York. The scheduled cover story was *U.S. News's* annual "America's Best Graduate Schools" rankings, but Zuckerman wanted to go with a cloning cover.

"Hi, Mort," said Fallows, standing as he spoke into the phone, giving the bad news. "It looks as if it's logistically impossible to shift the grad-school package to the following week." That was because a tie-in paperback book, with a more elaborate version of the magazine's graduate-school rankings, had already been shipped. "It would look odd to have the book go on sale ten days before the magazine."

When Fallows hung up, I asked him if he was upset that logistics prevented him from putting clones on the cover. He smiled and said, "You mean, given that it's the most important story of the last two or three decades? Yes." Fallows's central exhortation to journalists, delivered in his influential 1996 book "Breaking the News" and, staff members say, on the job week after week, is "Make the important interesting." Cloning is plainly both. All the same, here was the aggressively high-minded new editor of a self-consciously serious magazine meekly deferring to a modest commercial exigency. "But with the imperfect justice of the weekly-magazine business," he insisted, "the treatment in terms of the story will be identical to what it would be if we had it on the cover."


Fallows: "You could do worse than have 'The Simpsons' as the icon of where this magazine should be."

TOMAS MUSCIONICO/CONTACT PRESS

A little later, his managing editor, Harrison (Lee) Rainie, came in to tell him that the reporting staff was not enthusiastic about what it might be able to produce. It was Tuesday morning, and *U.S. News* doesn't print until late Friday night. Still, Rainie said to his boss, "We're going to scale back our ambitions on cloning."

"Fine," Fallows told him.

The next day, Zuckerman remained

hopeful about keeping the cover on the news. "We may have two covers—grad schools on the newsstand and cloning for subscribers," he said. It was not to be: while *Time* gave cloning six separate articles in fourteen pages, and *Newsweek* three articles in nine pages, Fallows stuck with his twenty-nine-page "Best Graduate Schools" package and devoted only five pages to clones. (As it turned out, the magazine had miscalculated its rankings of law schools, and the paperback books—the main argument for staying with the graduate-schools cover—were recalled.) The reason he finally skimped on cloning, Fallows explained after the issue closed, was that "we didn't think there was an enormous amount more to say than what was going to be said in the newspapers."

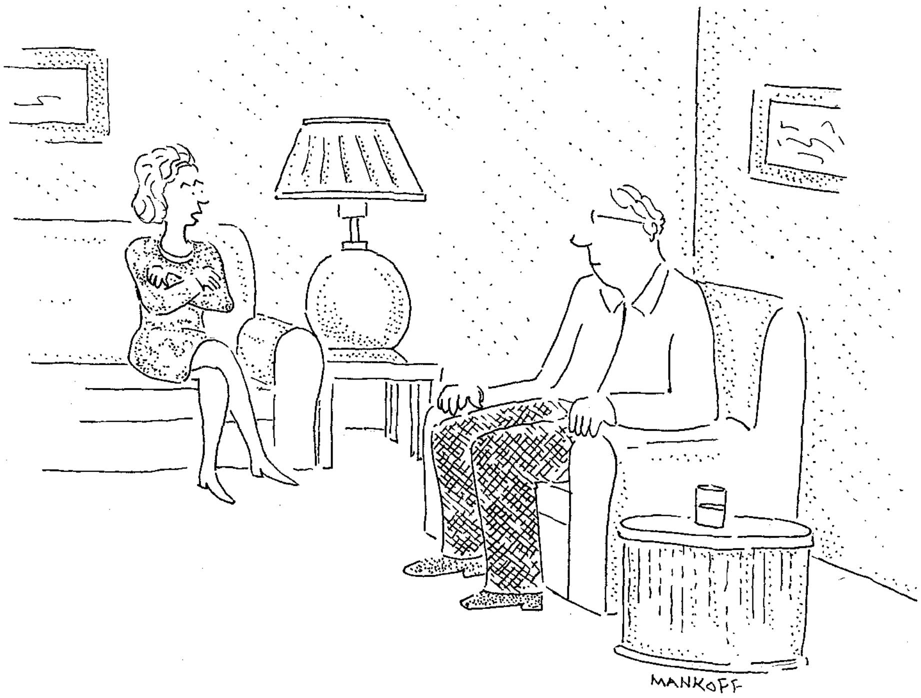
AND that is the problem of modern news magazines. What can they bring to their readers that newspapers and TV haven't delivered days before? "The time when I seriously read news magazines was when I first lived in Texas, in the late seventies," Fallows, who is forty-seven, recalls. "That was a different technological era, when you couldn't get a good daily paper there." Outside the big cities, news magazines "were indispensable as a source of news."

Fallows had touched the trailing end of that indispensability. It's hard to overstate the extent to which *Time* was the national news medium during the forties and fifties. *Newsweek* and *U.S. News* (both of which were founded in 1933, a decade after *Time*) were then decidedly third-rate. What *Time* provided, even more than information, was reality—or, at least, a snappy Ivy League Republican depiction of it. To appear on the cover of *Time* was to receive mass culture's unequivocal certification of importance, and the annual Man of the Year designation seemed less a gimmick than a kind of official occasion, the American equivalent of the Queen's New Year's honors list. As a quasi monopoly, *Time* could define newsworthiness at will, simply because it was what it pointedly called itself: "The Weekly News Magazine." Covers were given to novelists, composers, architects, college presidents, religious figures, African prime ministers, obscure Midwestern businessmen.

In 1961, after Philip Graham bought *Newsweek* for the Washington Post Company, installed Osborn Elliott as its editor, and promoted Ben Bradlee to be its Washington bureau chief, the magazine turned into the serious competitor *Time* hadn't had. And the period from Camelot to Nixon's resignation was a golden age for news magazines. "I remember we'd go crazy with joy if we had a little paragraph of something that nobody else had," Bradlee told me. John F. Kennedy was the perfect news-magazine President, and Camelot was the perfect news-magazine story, its plots and subplots and epiphenomena filling practically every section, from National Affairs to Modern Living to People. The assassinations, the civil-rights movement, the ghetto riots, the struggle with faith ("IS GOD DEAD?"), the updraft of the counterculture and Vietnam—it all made for a vivid epic that *Time* and *Newsweek* handsomely, lucratively serialized.

Then the rest of the media caught up. Thirty years ago, the weeklies could uniquely promise intelligence, clarity, and depth to a national audience—but then came "The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," on PBS, and "Nightline," on ABC, and CNN, MSNBC, and the Fox News Channel, and the Internet. Thirty years ago, the *Wall Street Journal* was not a first-rate general-interest paper, and the *Times* did not have a national edition. Nor had the big dailies yet remade themselves into daily news magazines, with sections devoted to style, celebrities, the arts, science, and so on. Today, even small provincial dailies are highly art-directed and filled with stories off the *Times* and Los Angeles *Times*/Washington *Post* wire services.

If the news magazines, conscious of their eroding significance, have developed something of an inferiority complex during the last couple of decades, *U.S. News*, the smallest and uncoolest of the three, suffers from a double case. To civilians, the differences between news magazines can be subtle, and in major respects the readerships of *Time* (4.1 million circulation), *Newsweek* (3.2 million), and *U.S. News* (2.3 million) are almost indistinguishable. The median reader of each magazine is a man in his forties with a household income of about fifty thousand dollars a year. On closer inspection, however, the demographic profile of *U.S. News* readers remains distinct. The magazine was founded in Washington by David Lawrence, a pro-business, anti-Roosevelt journalist, and some of that spirit still informs *U.S. News* today. The stereotype of the *U.S. News* reader is a retired lieutenant colonel living in Phoenix, and there may be a grain of truth to it. Zuckerman says his readers are "much more conservative" than those of *Time* and *Newsweek*. His publisher and president, Thomas Evans, maintains, "They're more in an information-processing mind-set. They tend to be more business-oriented." The readerships of the two other magazines,



"No, I don't think our marriage would benefit from a mission statement."

Evans says, "tend to skew more coastal," by which he means that his readers are slightly more likely to be from Southern or mountain states. *U.S. News* devotes its back-of-the-book to News You Can Use—service articles on subjects like health-insurance deductibles and high-tech cameras. The almost generic name of the magazine—*U.S. News & World Report*—has been apt. It has been "Dragnet" to its rivals' "Law & Order" or "NYPD Blue." Walter Isaacson, Fallows's counterpart at *Time*, says, "Mort bought publications that happened to become available"—*The Atlantic*, which Zuckerman bought in 1980, and the New York *Daily News*, in 1992, as well as *U.S. News*, in 1984—"and not necessarily the ones he most wanted."

Some of *U.S. News's* difficulties are endemic to the genre. As recently as 1988, the combined circulation of the three American newsweeklies was about 10.3 million; today, it has drifted down to around 9.6 million. Most of that loss is attributable to *Time*, whose newsstand sales have declined by a third since 1987; *Newsweek's* have fallen by twelve per cent over the past four years. *Time* has cut its corps of writers and correspondents from about a hundred and fifty to a hundred. *Newsweek* has reduced its staff, too. Both magazines have cut back sharply on researchers; indeed, an increasing number of *Newsweek* stories no longer go through a separate fact-checking process. In the early nineties, profit margins at all three newsweeklies were meagre. Business was bad enough that executives of *U.S. News* and the Washington Post Company, which owns *Newsweek*, began discussing a possible merger of the two magazines' circulation and ad-sales staffs, along the lines of certain cities' daily newspapers' joint operating agreements. (The talks went nowhere.) In the past few years, profits have rebounded at *Newsweek* (to $22.8 million last year) and even more strongly at *Time* (to almost twice that). But here, too, *U.S. News* has lagged behind. The magazine has had two straight years of advertising declines, and makes only a small profit. To increase earnings, *U.S. News* needs to increase its ad sales, which means acquiring an aura of heat among the people at advertising agencies. That's where Fallows comes in.

The business slough aside, everyone at *U.S. News* seems to agree that the magazine was in need of editorial reinvigoration. *U.S. News* has been the least writerly and energetic of the newsweeklies, and in the past several years it seemed once again to be earning its old nickname: Snooze. One *U.S. News* writer, a friend of Mike Ruby and Mimi McLoughlin, the husband-and-wife co-editors whom Fallows succeeded, says, "They were just plugging holes. When a first-rate person left, they would just promote the second guy behind him, so no new blood was coming in. A lot of the writers just went to sleep."

When Fallows arrived, in September, he quickly replaced nine writers and editors. "Jim came in and said lifetime employment is not necessarily going to be the norm in the future," James Impoco, the business and technology editor, says. "Knowing Fallows the way I do, I thought that would be the biggest challenge for him. I didn't think he would do it, because he's a very nice guy—though that would be disputed wildly now."

U.S. *News* shares a bland, postmodern building with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in a quiet, nondescript section of a city that does not regard nondescript as a pejorative. Jim Fallows's third-floor office has two computer workstations (one is for reading copy, the other for everything else), but the personal touches—a messy stack of jazz CDs, a plate of plastic spaghetti with a spaghetti-entwined fork hovering above it—are bohemian by Washington-office standards. It is the first real office outside his home that Fallows has had since 1978, when he quit as Jimmy Carter's chief speechwriter. Probably his most significant job before that was as a writer and editor at the neoliberal *Washington Monthly*. A Rhodes scholar and Harvard graduate, he arrived in 1972 and helped usher in that tiny magazine's decade of magnificently disproportionate influence. Although he has been on the masthead of *The Atlantic Monthly* for seventeen years, Fallows has primarily been an author, who grinds out big, serious books intended to frame and influence major national debates.

"Breaking the News," like Fallows's earlier books—on defense policy, on educational meritocracy in America, and on

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the political economy of East Asia—is ambitious, sober, and lucid. The book forcefully argues that the media spend too much time and energy reporting the trivial and the merely contentious, and that élite journalists tend to be out of touch with the concerns of the little guy. He also loosely embraces the ideas of "public journalism"—a movement emphasizing that journalists are also citizens who bear some obligation in their work to help remedy community and social problems.

His arrival at *U.S. News* as editor has naturally meant that the magazine would be held to a grander, better standard than that of the competition. Unfortunately for him, that's a high bar—or, rather, the existing bar is not as low as he suggested in his book. *Time* and *Newsweek*, for all their coverage of O.J. and Princess Di, are staffed with thoughtful writers who are given space for substantive and worthy stories—at least as many pages in a typical issue as *U.S. News* can spare for such stuff. And Fallows is well aware that virtuous intentions are not enough to improve the magazine, let alone increase its ad sales. "Something that drove me crazy in the reaction to my book was the idea that this public-journalism concept was so doctrinaire," he says. "That it meant as soon as you went to any publication you would be saying, 'Now we have the public-journalism orders here from the Pew Charitable Trusts, and then we'll start having our uplifting stories.' When I came here, my idea was not to have a sort of utopian model farm but to put out a good magazine—a good version of *this* magazine."

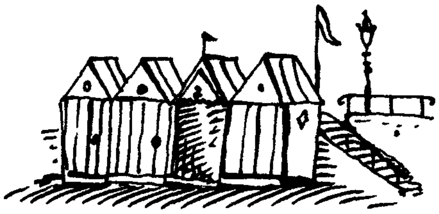
As in the other American newsweeklies, there is a front section of short articles, three or four to a page, and sections devoted to domestic news, foreign news, business, and society-and-ideas stories, with each article typically a page or two long. Then the major genetic difference kicks in: *Time* and *Newsweek* run stories about movies and show business and books and performers, and *U.S. News* pretty much doesn't. Although the magazine has pitched its obliviousness of culture as a strategic choice, Fallows seems to feel a bit hemmed in by it. "*U.S. News* is probably eight or ten pages shorter than *Time* or *Newsweek*," he says. "Part of that is deliberate and self-inflicted, in having this ten-year-old franchise of News You Can Use. There's room in *Time* and *Newsweek* for regular reviews of movies, music, the theatre, and art. That brings a kind of built-in sizzle to the other magazines." The News You Can Use section was recently expanded by half—at Zuckerman's direction—and, of course, that has further reduced the space Fallows can allot to more consequential journalism.

He has also inherited an editorial apparatus that is skimpy even when compared with the downsized *Time* and *Newsweek*. *U.S. News*, with its Friday-night deadline, prints at least twenty-four hours earlier than the others. "That difference is the one which veteran newshounds—I'm saying those words ironically—would most lament," Fallows says. And the staff is small. *U.S. News* has just twenty full-time domestic and foreign correspondents; *Time* has seventeen reporters posted in Washington alone.

"He hasn't really spelled out in great detail exactly where he wants to take the magazine," Impoco says. "He's been doing damage control, trying to bring the quality of the magazine up to a level where he can contemplate that." Because Fallows was not a close reader of *U.S. News* before he took the job, he didn't realize that the prose was often mediocre. "The quality of the writing surprised him," one of his editors says.

"There are stronger and weaker contributors," Fallows says diplomatically. "I spend a lot of my time at simple copy editing and story doctoring. I think it's something I know how to do. It's somewhere I'm seen as having a legitimate judgment."

Every Monday, he E-mails a memo to the staff filled with assessments of the new issue—the usual back-patting and, often, writing instruction. Some of the memos have been as long as fourteen hundred words, but he says that lately "I try to confine them to very brief lessons of the week—here's the lesson about overusing metaphors, here's the lesson about clarity of a sentence." He pauses to annotate himself: "I'm using 'lesson' in ironic terms." But they *are* lessons. "In a news magazine it's usually not appropriate for the author to play a large first-person role in the story," one recent missive observed. "Metaphors used with care can be tremendously effective in conveying meaning. . . . We should try never to use familiar, empty images."



As Fallows is aware, his sense of news inspires less confidence at the magazine than his sense of language. It has been a quarter of a century since he graduated from Harvard, where he was the editor of the *Crimson;* since then, he has almost exclusively taken the long view, producing essays and reportage that aim for relevance not days and weeks but months and years hence. Although the ubiquity of headline services—on TV, on the Web, and now on cell phones and pagers—has obviated some of the week-in-review mission of news magazines, they do remain *news*-weeklies. A newsroom urgency is, for most of the people who produce the magazines and many who read them, part of the attraction. Fallows doesn't get off on that stop-the-presses adrenaline.

Brian Duffy, who used to run *U.S. News's* investigative team and, after Fallows arrived, its national-news section, recently left to work for the Washington *Post.* "My interests have always been in covering the news as it happens," he says. "And Jim had less of an urgent sense about that than I did." Duffy remembers being incredulous last fall when Fallows didn't want to schedule a big story on the firefight between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security forces on the West Bank, which was "the biggest incident since the start of the *intifada*," Duffy says. "Mort told me he was very surprised, and thought we should have done more on it."

Nicholas Lemann is both Fallows's professional doppelgänger (Harvard *Crimson* president, *Washington Monthly* writer, *Atlantic* correspondent, author of important nonfiction books) and an old friend. Fallows "doesn't have that much of a newshound gene," he concedes. "I'm not going to say he has this inner sense of what a news story is. That's not Jim. The question is, does someone who doesn't have a conventional news sense still have the ability to make a news magazine work?"

"Sure, there are learning curves that go with anybody who hasn't done this," Zuckerman says. "That's why it takes a little time for this transition to evolve. He has a sense of news; it may not be quite as sensitive at this stage, but he's going to have other people around who will work with him on that."

Fallows, for his part, maintains that he has a perfectly fine news sense. His cover story a month ago on how drug cartels

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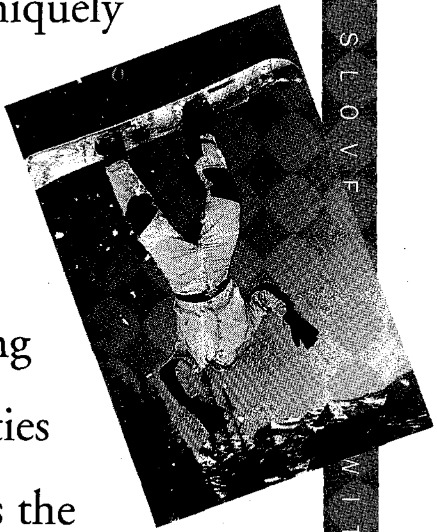

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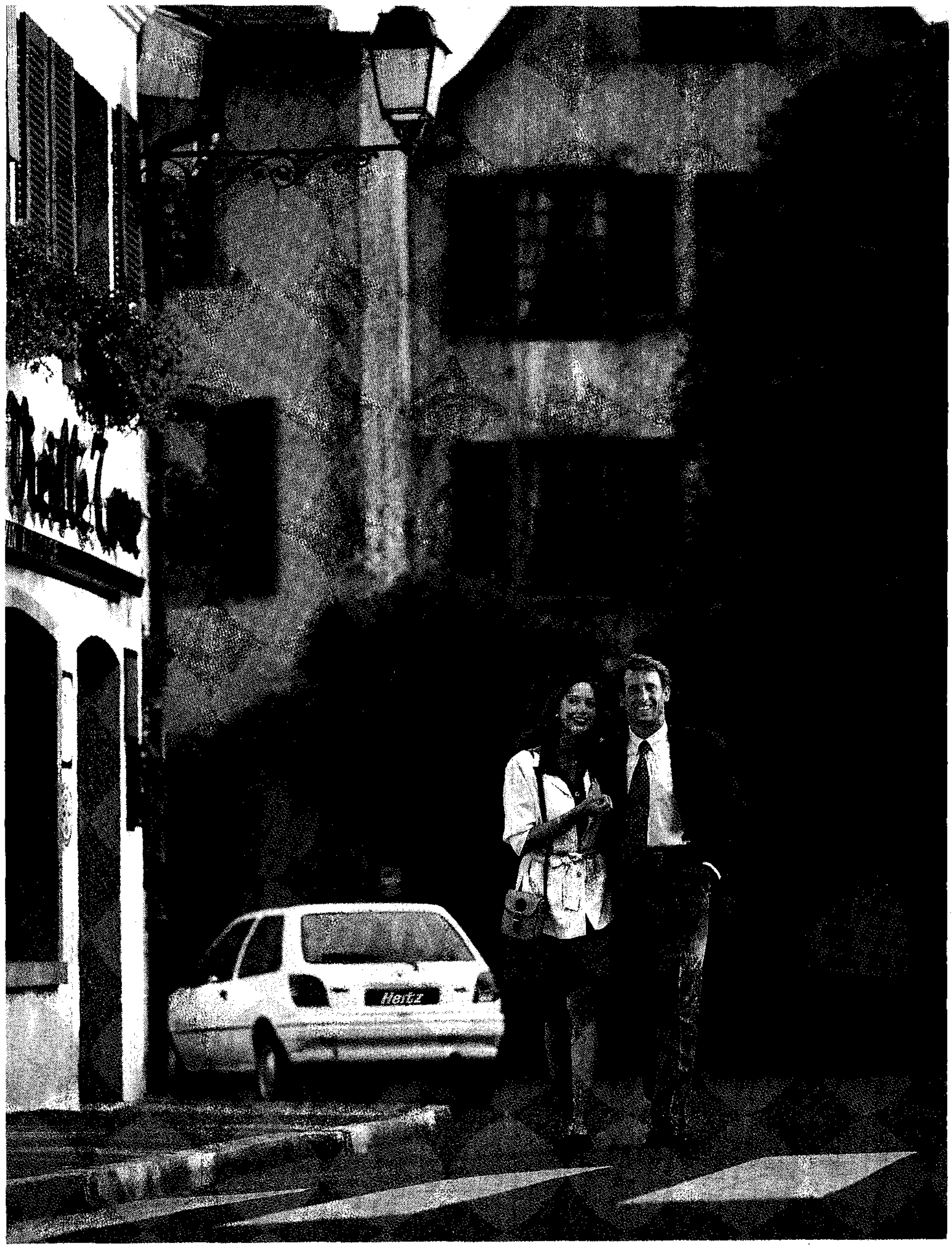

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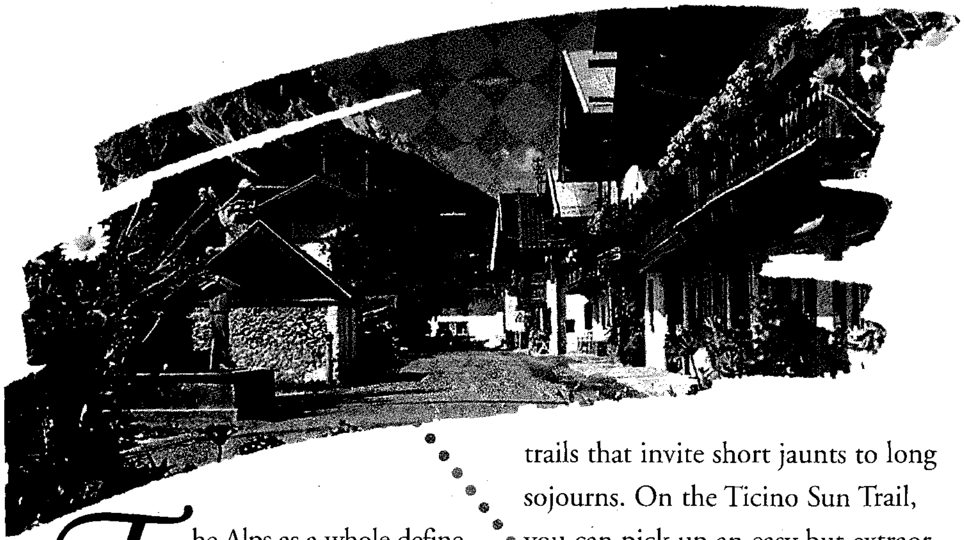

The Alps as a whole define a lush, adventurous, and nature-embracing region that can be enjoyed in myriad ways from hiking to golfing, climbing to snowboarding, cycling to simply sitting back and drinking in the views. You can even do this while enjoying the marvelous cuisine of the Alpine region and experiencing the company of some of the friendliest people in Europe.

Walking the Walk

Whatever the venue or country, hiking is the most elemental and rewarding of Alpine activity.

Switzerland alone has more than 31,000 miles of well-marked trails that invite short jaunts to long sojourns. On the Ticino Sun Trail, you can pick up an easy but extraordinary path through the Italian-speaking corner of the country, a balmy region of palm trees and post-card villages. On the Bear Trail in the lofty Bernese Oberland (part of an itinerary offered by Swissair), you wind your way through Alpine passes, past glaciers and waterfalls, under the sheer cliff faces of Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau.

Just beyond the Matterhorn, Italy's Val d'Aosta, is an exquisitely picturesque valley dotted with Roman ruins and ancient castles. In the Dolomites, those bare and craggy Italian peaks on the southern side of the Alps, your path may lead to a *rifugio,* the overnight mountain retreats that serve up trans-Alpine cuisine: risotto and grilled meats, caffé and hot grappa.

Austria, another hiker's paradise, has exciting hut-to-hut programs which enable you to walk from one hut to the next, across mountains and valleys, in a comfortable five or six hours. The huts cater to everyone, but members of the Austrian Alpine Club are especially welcome, and it's easy to become a member!

The village of Mayrhofen is the gateway to one of the most picturesque and dramatic walks in the Ziller Valley. For the more adventurous, the famous mountaineer, Peter Habeler, will guide you through the Ziller Valley—an altogether more

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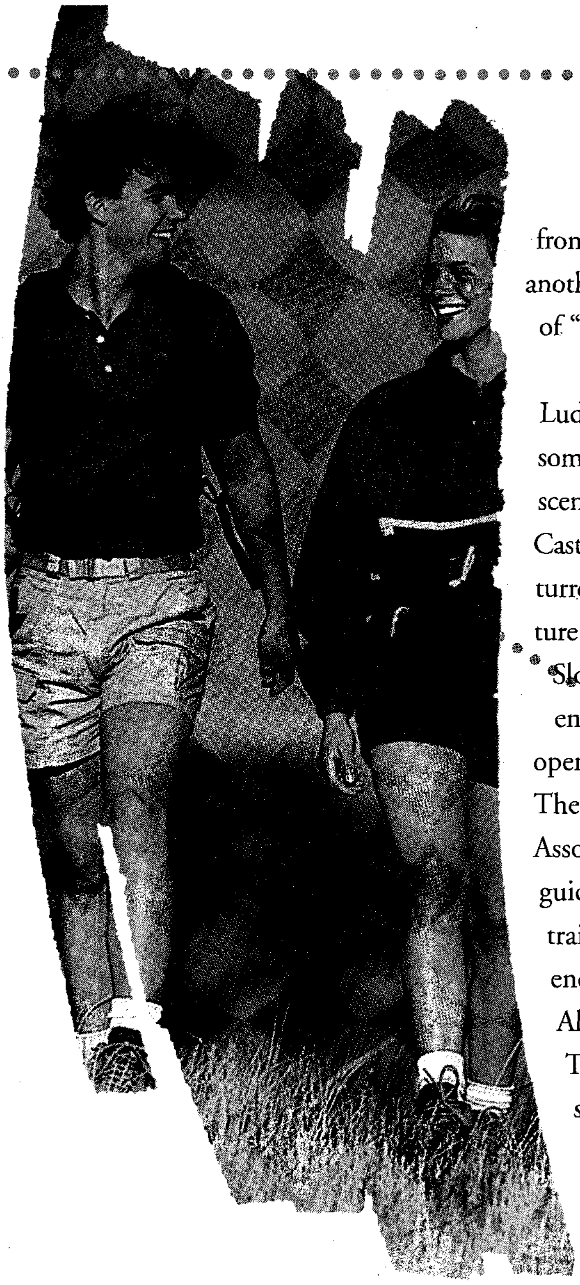


rigorous experience. And don't miss the romantic lantern hikes from Innsbruck to Gasthof Heiligwasser.

Germans love hiking and you can join them on the sign posted paths through Bavaria. Hiking in this breathtaking country has a distinctly regal air. With pristine lakes and dream castles, the trails are a wonderland. One of the most entrancing is the three-day hike from Bad Endorf to Austria's Kufstein. Bearing the motto, "from Emperor to King—without borders," the trail typifies the spirit of the Alps, where you can walk from one glorious country to another, all the time under the spell of "The Alps."

Bavaria also boasts "King Ludwig's Trail," which leads via some of Germany's most stunning scenery to the Neuschwanstein Castle. This inspired collection of turrets and spires is the most picture book of them all!

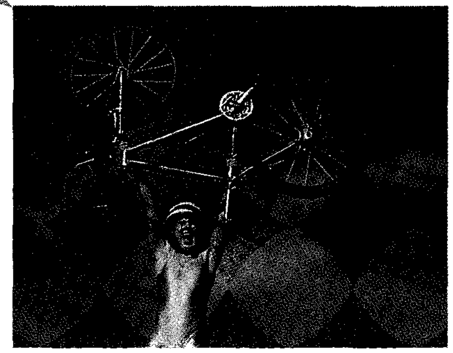
Slovenia, young in years but legendary in its passion for hiking, operates over 5,600 miles of trails. The active and efficient Alpine Association of Slovenia organizes guided hikes and maintains 165 trailside cabins. There are enchanting walks in the Julian Alps and fairy tale views in the Triglav National Park with its seven glacial lakes.

Across the entire five-country region, of course, challenges abound for those who won't walk when they can climb. Whether your sport is rappelling rocky walls or scaling true peaks, the Alps are very much inclined.

Two-Wheel Touring

Cyclists can have it both ways in the Alps: easy meadowland cruising or endurance-testing challenges on high mountain passes. For a well-moderated mix of the two, sign up with a tour company specializing in Alpine bicycle tours. You'll have a guide or two, a relaxed itinerary to follow with hotels arranged and meal stops suggested, and the all important "sag wagon" to pick up stragglers, fix a flat tire, or cart luggage to the next village.

Austria, gearing up for the bicycle boom, has laid out a widening network of trails and equipped its tourist offices with touring maps and website lists of bike-friendly inns. The Tauern bike trail, a peddlers' dream come true, starts at the Krimml Waterfalls, the highest in central Europe and runs along the boundary of the spectacular Hohe Tauern National Park. It passes near the spectacular Hohenwerfen castle set in the hills made famous by "The



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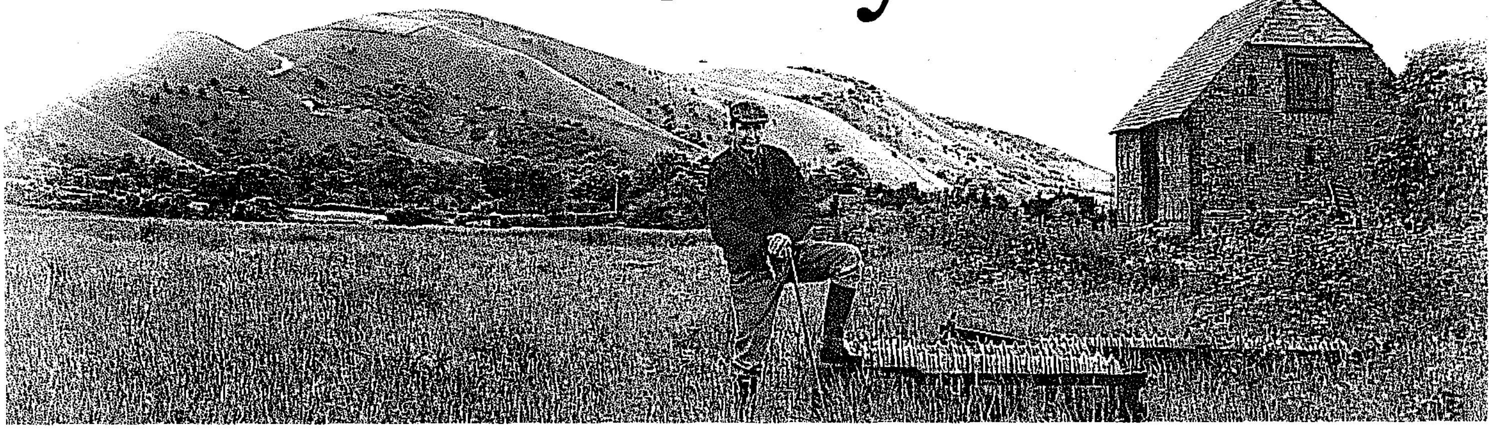

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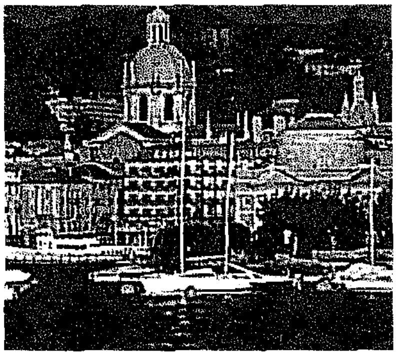

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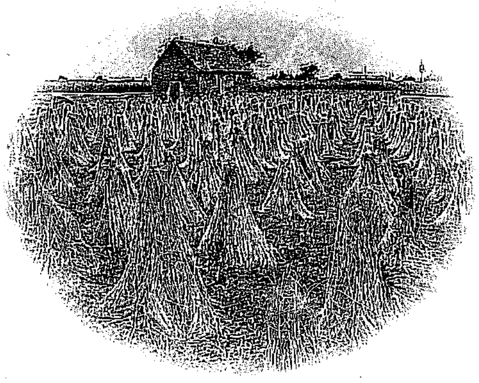

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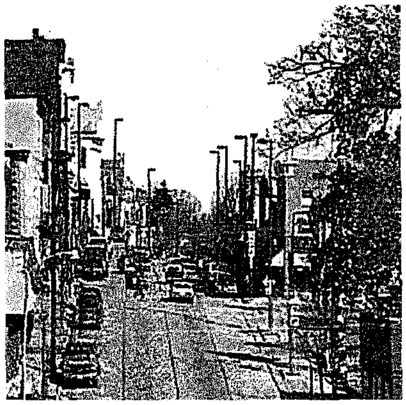

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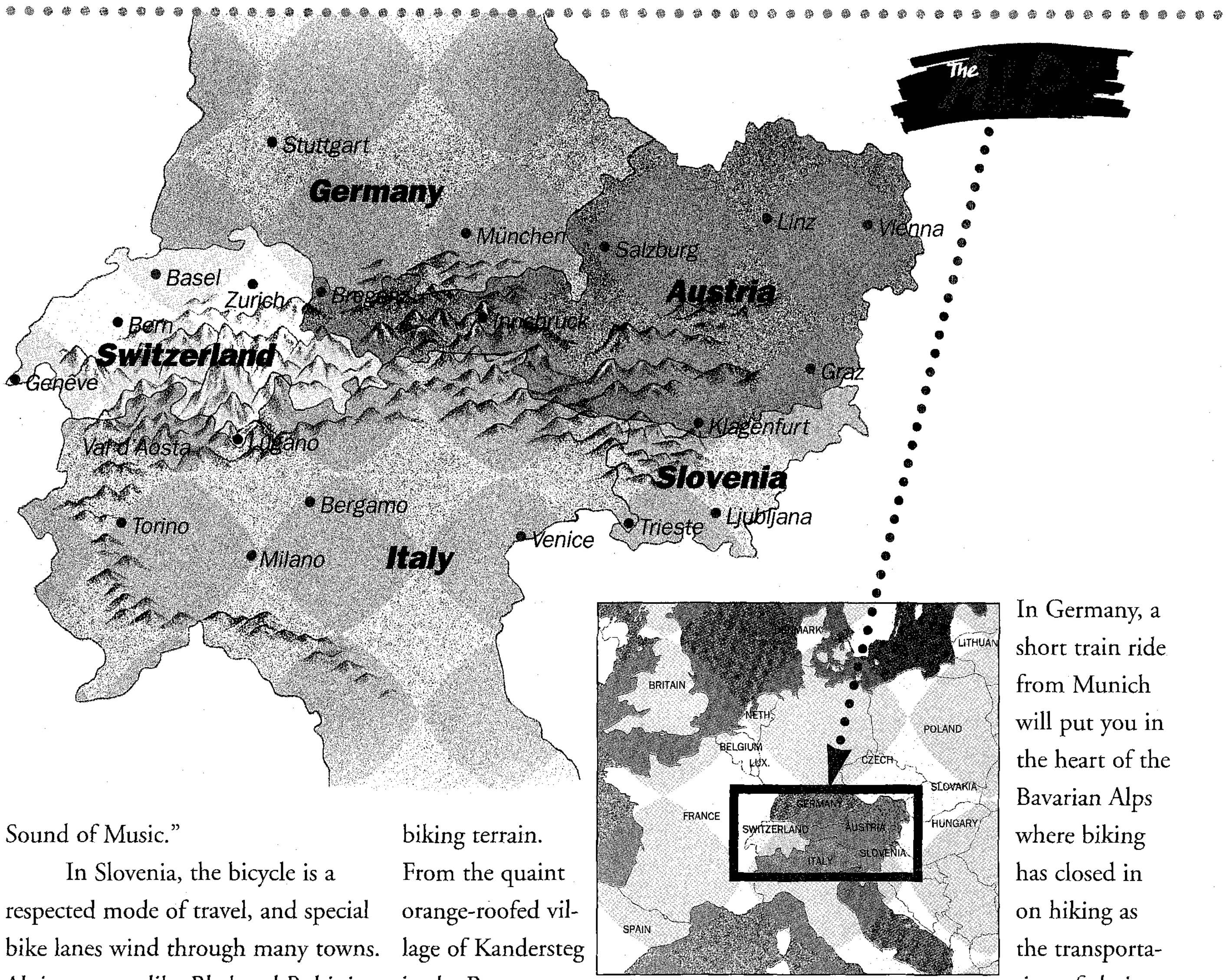
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Sound of Music.”

In Slovenia, the bicycle is a respected mode of travel, and special bike lanes wind through many towns. Alpine resorts like Bled and Bohinj will rent mountain bikes and launch you on well-mapped tours of the lofty countryside and jeweled lakes.

Given its towering peaks and plunging waterfalls, Switzerland can present some remarkably forgiving biking terrain. From the quaint orange-roofed village of Kandersteg in the Bernese Oberland, you can spin lazily through green valley floors. Lake Lucerne's shore is an easy and scenic run and when the going gets tough in Switzerland, there's always a cable car or mountain train to hop onto.

In Germany, a short train ride from Munich will put you in the heart of the Bavarian Alps where biking has closed in on hiking as the transportation of choice. There is rollicking, roller-coaster fun on the 190 miles of trails between Ammersee and the Lech River, and in the Chiemgau.

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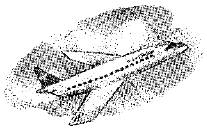

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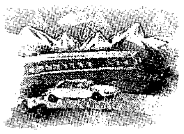

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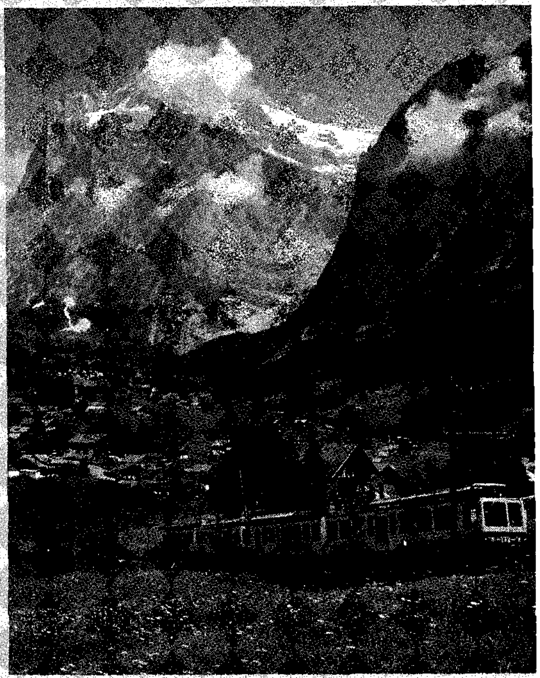

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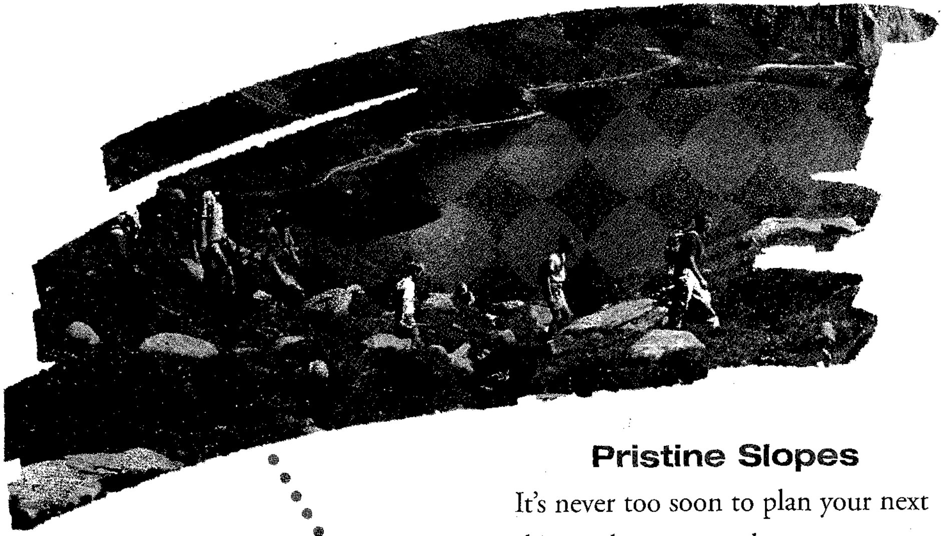

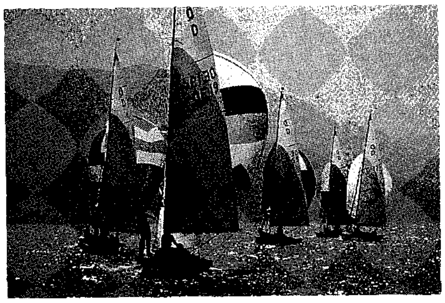

Club Murhof, just outside Graz. It's rumored that the native Styrian, Arnold Schwarzenegger, played there.

In Germany's lofty Allgau, fairways play around the gemlike lakes and peaks. Bavaria boasts a total of 122 golf courses. Italy scatters fifty courses across the Alpine foothills. One of the most venerable is the Alpino Golf Club in Stresa. Switzerland divides its topflight golf among five key resorts—Ascona, Crans-Montana, Gstaad, Lucerne, and Lugano; packages can be arranged to any or all. In Slovenia's Julian Alps is the internationally renowned 158-acre Bled Golf Course and, hidden in the calm beauty of the Dolenjska region, the eighteen-hole Morkrice Castle Golf Course.

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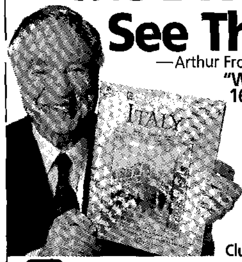
It's never too soon to plan your next skiing adventure—whatever season you choose. Slalom courses web down mountains and over slopes to give you the best traditional downhill sport, cross-country and off-piste skiing as well as the hot trends of snowboarding and heli-skiing.

If you're willing to go the extra kilometer, summer skiing is an option. Near Zell am See, one of Austria's eight major summer ski resorts, an aerial tram takes you to the glacier Kitzsteinhorn, and from there it's a 2,000-foot vertical drop to the base lodge, corn snow all the way. In the Swiss Alps, there's summer skiing above Gstaad, Saas Fee, Verbier, and Zermatt.

But don't forget some of the other ways to enjoy the snow—tobogganing, sledding, snow-mobiling.

Water, Please

In the Alps, water is everywhere—streams and falls, raging rivers, and pastoral lakes. And where there is water, there is sport: kayaking, whitewater rafting, canoeing, windsurfing, waterskiing, and sailing. Italy's lake



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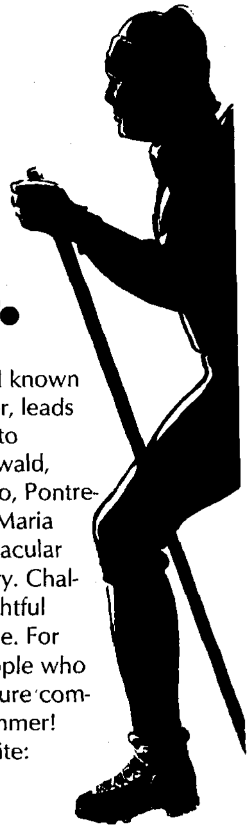

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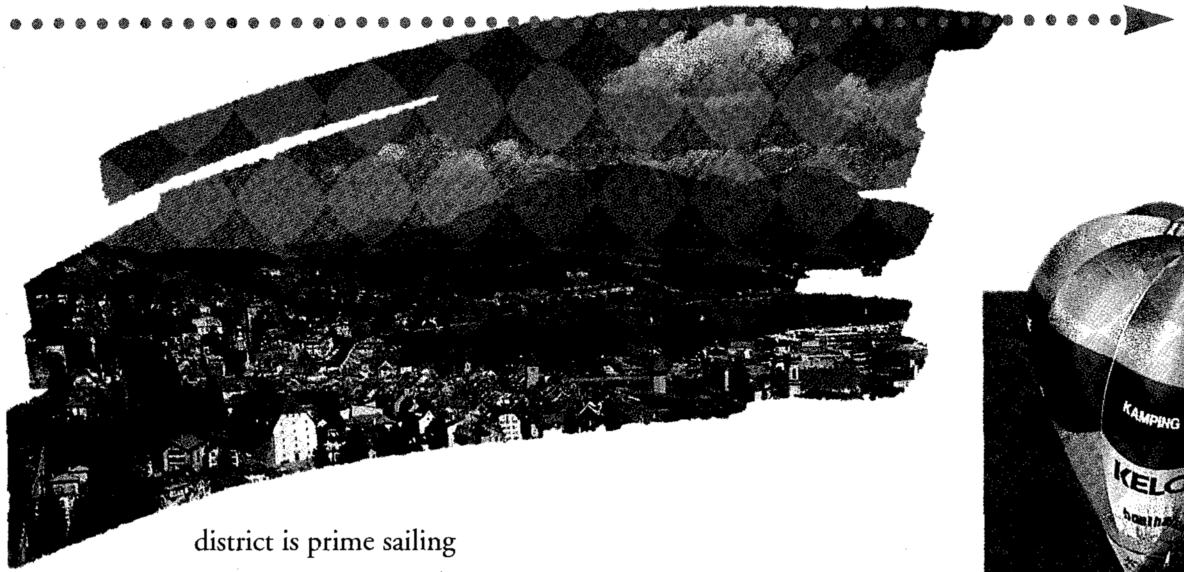

district is prime sailing and windsurfing country. Lake Garda is deep, blue, brushed by palmy vegetation, and favored with sail-friendly winds that rise to perfection at midday around the resort towns of Riva and Torble. In Switzerland's lake-rich Graubunden, Jungfrau, and Engadine regions, you can enroll in specialty schools for sailing and windsurfing. Slovenia is throwing itself into hydrospeeding and canoeing. In rented wet suit and helmet (and under supervision) you run the rapids of surging Soca River, clinging to a hydrospeed raft.

On the scenic inland sea called the Bodensee, which Austria shares with Germany and Switzerland, there is ample waterskiing, sailboarding, scuba and sailing. In 1997 and 1998, a highlight of the Bregenz Festival on the shores of the Bodensee will be performances of "Porgy & Bess" on a floating stage.

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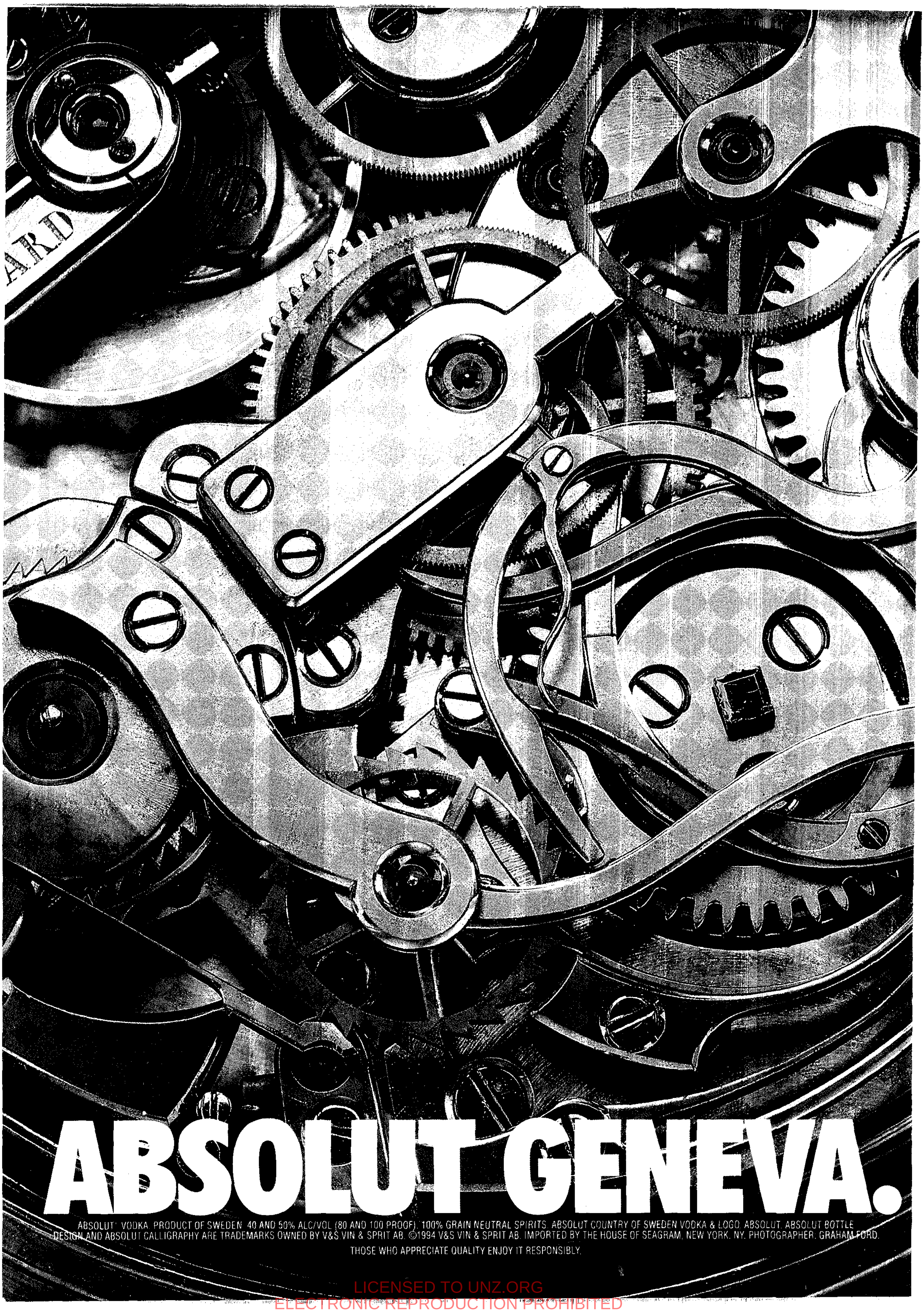

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DESPITE HER PAIN, ANOTHER DAY

River fogs (7 A.M.) stray and begin, shiver and begin
on the September mill rocks.
Bits of leaf mirror along. I have arrived at my sanity.
Evidence (7 P.M.): while she medicates I walk by the river.
Millwheel smells like wet corn husk.
On my back (2:38 A.M.) in the dark at Krugers B. & B. I listen to the radiator click
and to her, awake on the other side of town
in the hot small room,
gripping a glow-in-the-dark rosary.
Whatever they say about time, life only moves in one direction,
that's a fact, mirroring along.
River fogs (7 A.M.) go flayed and silvery
when it dawns dark
on the day I leave.
"Danger Do Not Drop or Drag Anchor"
reads a sign just off the selvedges.
Mindingness gulps us.
Her on the bed as bent twigs.
Me, as ever, gone.

—Anne Carson

have corrupted the Mexican government was impressively ahead of the curve. And there is an old-fashioned news-magazine instinct that lets the *Times* front page and the Associated Press wire dictate one's journalistic agenda. The wire-service-hack attitude has hung heavy at *U.S. News,* and Fallows isn't wrong to resist it. "My goal is to have serious-minded coverage of the world that is not dull—and I stress the last part," he says. "The thing I have been spending most of my time on here is not the serious-minded part but trying to make it more interesting, trying to have funnier headlines, trying to have funnier covers, trying to have things that you would actually want to read." He illustrated a cover story on jobs with a Roy Lichtenstein-like cartoon, a cover story on Microsoft with Bill Gates as a martyred St. Sebastian, a cover story on the Clinton Inauguration playing off the "Sgt. Pepper's" album cover. When I asked him his favorite articles so far, the first three he mentioned were a contrarian history of Christmas, an article on the risks of plastic surgery illustrated with a cover photograph of a bare female back, and, most recently, "The Business of Porn: An Inside Look at the Sex Industry."

I asked him if such stories represent a deliberate effort to disappoint those who expect a worthy, medicinal Jim Fallows news magazine. "I'm sure at some buried level of my subconscious, the idea may have occurred to me," he says. More to the point, none of these stories would have been surprising in *Time* or *Newsweek.* Although he says that his magazine's "long-run survival depends on being different from *Time* and *Newsweek,*" his commitment to such distinctiveness seems somewhat theoretical. What he describes as his charter—"a kind of news-based explanation," "a sexy version of real news"—could be news-magazine boilerplate. "Maybe this is a terrible thing to say, but I don't read *Time* and *Newsweek* much more closely than I used to before becoming editor of *U.S. News,*" he told me. "I look through them without reading them seriously." Without a vision of a distinct editorial alternative to *Time* and *Newsweek,* however, a generally improving *U.S. News* will almost inevitably become more like its competitors—smarter, more literate, and more interesting to Jim Fallows-like readers than it has been previously, but with a possibly diminished reason for being.

Is he worried about alienating archetypal *U.S. News* readers with his funnier, sexier stories? "It's certainly the case that you lose people faster than you get them," he said of the audience reaction to his editorial changes. "But this magazine cannot afford not to bring new readers in. A certain amount of trade-off and churning is necessary." He concedes that the subscriber-renewal rate has declined since his arrival, but says the decline is by only a small margin and is entirely attributable to a five-dollar increase in the subscription price which took effect last year. Unfortunately, there's no evidence that new readers are clambering in via the newsstand, which sometimes happens when a magazine makes itself livelier. Evans, the publisher, says that newsstand sales are "flat to down" since Fallows has been editor.

Of course, cosmopolites—the overclass, the chattering classes, the urban élite, whatever—were never great news-magazine readers. In the old days, being unfashionable never much bothered the people who produced *Time* and *Newsweek,* probably because the institutional power of the publications made up for the fact that one's Manhattan friends didn't always read what one produced. Today, that power has ebbed. (Surely one of the reasons *Time* is willing to pay its excellent art critic Robert Hughes so extravagantly is that his presence makes staff members feel good about working at *Time.*)

In the short term, the presence of a well-known, and even controversial, new editor is probably good for business. Walter Isaacson says, "*U.S. News* doesn't get much of a buzz, but Fallows does." And buzz, of course, is good. "Every few years," Evans says, "you want to be able to say, 'This is new and different.' Jim has certainly gotten us a tremendous amount of visibility." That kind of thinking seems incongruous with the down-to-earth, businesslike self-conceptions of both Fallows and *U.S. News,* but then selling a magazine to its highly distinct constituencies—old readers, new readers, advertisers—is a complicated, paradoxical enterprise. If a few hundred journalists in New York and Washington are talking excitedly about a magazine's new editor, for whatever reason, soon a few hundred ad-agency space buyers should be talking excitedly, too, and then, if the magazine's salespeople get lucky, the ads increase. Bob Mancini, the director of print buying for the J. Walter Thompson-U.S.A. agency in Detroit, controls magazine advertising for Ford cars, and he told me, "By bringing in Jim Fallows, who is one of the more brilliant writers around, *U.S. News & World Report* is doing an excellent job of contemporizing itself." By contemporiz-

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ing, did he mean making itself more like *Time* and *Newsweek*? "Definitely," he said.

"FALLOWS is not part of my crowd," Ben Bradlee, the lord of Georgetown, says. "But people are talking about him a lot, there's no question about that. He's in, and the spotlight's on him. My crowd talks about him." That doesn't necessarily mean they have nice things to say. In Washington, where Fallows and his family have lived for the past six years, he is not an object of great affection. I asked him why he thought that was.

"It's a good thing that I am not a politician, or a consumer product," he replied. "Obviously, my marketing has been faulty. My friends, I think, haven't found me a figure devoid of humor, yet somehow the public view of me is of Cotton Mather redux. But my main answer is, I don't know."

The main answer is "Breaking the News," with its gauntlet toss of a subtitle—"How the Media Undermine American Democracy." The book not only reproves the national media culture for being nihilistic and bloody-minded but also accuses by name some of its most prominent Washington members—Judy Woodruff, Brit Hume, Sam Donaldson, Cokie Roberts, Richard Cohen, and George Will among them—of superficiality and venality. And when it comes to public criticism no one is more thin-skinned than journalists.

Does anyone disagree with Fallows's point that TV's ritualized ideological wrestling matches—"The McLaughlin Group," "The Capital Gang," "Crossfire," and so on—are unenlightening? Even the participants don't dispute this, but they still loathe Fallows for making the case so emphatically. And they squirmed at his assertion that the corollary practice of "buckraking," whereby name-brand journalists collect fifteen- and thirty-thousand-dollar speaking fees from trade associations and businesses, might pose conflicts of interest.

"I read his book," Zuckerman says, "and I knew all about it, yet it's one thing to write about it in the abstract and another thing to manage a staff." Shortly after his arrival, Fallows instituted at *U.S. News* a strict speaking-fee policy. Zuckerman now says, "You can't have too arbitrary a ruling—how absolute you make it is really difficult. Look, this is an important part of the income of some of these people." Among these people are the *U.S. News* political columnist and "Face the Nation" regular Gloria Borger and the magazine's editor-at-large, David Gergen (who received almost half a million dollars in fees in 1992, according to "Breaking the News"). After months of to-and-fro, it was determined that the speaking-fee policy will not apply to either of them, because they are freelance contributors, not full-time *U.S. News* employees. Both are friendly with Zuckerman.

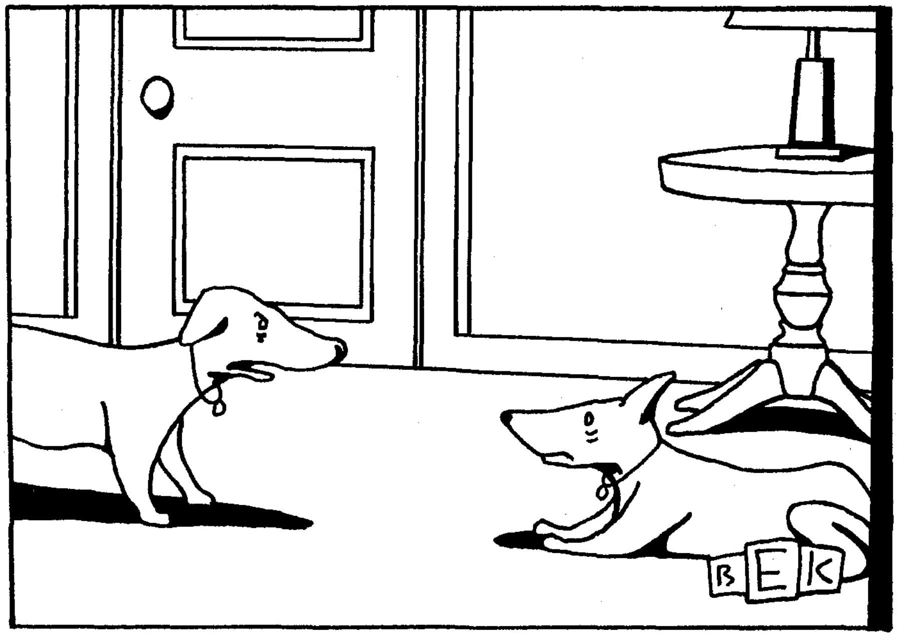
So was Steven Roberts, another prominent *U.S. News* writer, of whom Fallows had been especially critical in "Breaking the News." Fallows fired him promptly, and Roberts became a kind of Georgetown martyr. After Fallows pushed aside or drove out other, less well-known staff members, the antagonism toward him acquired a pious sheen.

"All these people who are horrified at what Fallows is supposed to be doing to *U.S. News* never read *U.S. News* and never cared about *U.S. News* before," Nick Lemann says. Some of the attacks do seem disingenuous, including a lot of the flak Fallows gets because of his mild endorsement of public journalism. Advocates of public journalism "do not have the complete or satisfying answer to all of today's journalistic problems," Fallows wrote in his book. "But . . . they are more right than wrong."

This is not exactly zealotry. Yet, according to a commentary in the *Times* last year by Howell Raines, the editorial-page editor and former Washington editor, Fallows is "a fount of dangerous nonsense," and "journalists influenced by early political employment are more apt to judge journalism by whether it makes life easy for candidates and officeholders."

A year later, Fallows is still steaming over Raines's broadside. "It surprised me in its obtuseness," he says. "I would assume that the person running the editorial page of the New York *Times* could distinguish between onetime experience in government twenty years ago"—Fallows's two years in the Carter White House—"and being a mouthpiece of the state, that such a person could distinguish between criticism and nihilism, that these would not be distinctions that escaped his mental grasp. It seems to me a willful misreading. I can't believe that people are stupid enough to think the only choice is *Izvestia* or withering sarcasm."

Raines and Fallows have a real disagreement about the proper role of journalists—whether they should be prosecutorial samurai or truthtelling wise men. But most of the Washington talk about Fal-



“ ‘Pee on the carpet!’ That’s your solution to everything.”

lows is, at its core, personal and visceral. As far as his peers are concerned, it seems, Fallows is just not very clubbable. The role-of-journalism debate that has swirled around Fallows, Bradlee figures, is “a smoke screen.” What really bugs people, he thinks, is “the air he has of being superior.”

Like Bradlee, Fallows is handsome and Harvard-educated and frank. Unlike Bradlee, he strikes people as a goody-goody. He looks like a son of George Bush, which in Washington isn’t necessarily bad, but he comes across to some like a John Anderson—a sanctimonious neo-something. “Washington particularly hates moralists,” Nick Lemann says. “The Washington establishment really hates Ralph Nader”—for whom Fallows once worked—“and it hated Jimmy Carter. It’s an intensely practical-minded city. It’s a city that worships Sam Nunn.”

Fallows is bracingly, admirably forthright, but in the manner of a progressive Episcopalian from an earlier age. “As observant staff members will have noticed,” one of his memos chirruped, “new bodies (and accompanying souls!) keep filtering into the building.” He described his weekly memos to me, probably with some irony, as “long epistles” and “shorter epistles.” He is prone to speak like an Edith Wharton character. “The main peril at the national level,” he said to me one morning in his office, “is one that makes the top of my head threaten to detonate in irritation.” Then again, at other times he’ll spout the language of a bureaucratic task-force leader. “I’ll work up an action plan,” he says during a story meeting with twenty staff members, and, later, “Let me make an action point.”

Show us a moralist and we can’t wait to find the hypocrisy—such is the pathological skepticism of American journalists, Fallows argues. The worst thing they can get him on is the fact that after leaving the Carter Administration he wrote an article for *The Atlantic* called “The Passionless Presidency.” Its most memorable insider revelation—that Carter personally oversaw the White House tennis-court schedule—became the paradigmatic fact about Carter’s Presidency. “The new scolding Fallows,” Maureen Dowd wrote in her *Times* column last year, “would probably find the old scalding Fallows ‘cynical.’ ” Fallows’s enemies, stretching the point, say that he was the seminal White House tattletale—that Nancy Reagan’s astrologer and Dick Morris are his spawn. “That’s sort of the Cokie Roberts–George Will doctrine now,” he says. “I know I was not the first person who was providing inside data about an Administration.” Yet he does hold himself retroactively to his own rigorous standards, and finds the Fallows of 1979 wanting. “In retrospect,” he says, the tennis-court story “did no good whatsoever.” According to Lemann, Charles Peters, the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly*, had hoped to use Fallows as a “policy pipeline” to Carter. “It looked like a very short step from chief speechwriter to chief adviser,” Lemann says. “It was very devastating to Charlie as it dawned on him that Jim was expected to only write speeches.” Did Fallows’s personal disappointment that he didn’t assume the sort of role that Ted Sorensen played for Kennedy or Bill Moyers played for Johnson fuel some of his philosophical disappointment? “Yeah,” Lemann says. “I think so.”

Fallows now finds himself both defending his high scruples and disputing the charge that he is sanctimonious. I asked him what he likes on television. “I religiously watch ‘The Simpsons’ and ‘The X-Files,’ and not much else except sports,” he replied. “ ‘The Simpsons’ I view as the greatest creative achievement of our time. You could do worse than have ‘The Simpsons’ as the icon of where this magazine should be.” After a pause, he added, “It is alarming to me that the two shows I watch are both on Fox, because Fox also puts out all this shit.”

U.S. *News* is the only one of Zuckerman’s publications where he has installed himself on the masthead as editor-in-chief. That desire for hands-on stewardship is one reason for the rapid turnover of his first three editors. Another reason may be that none of the three—Shelby Coffey, David Gergen, and Roger Rosenblatt—had ever run a magazine before. Neither has Fallows. And, like Rosenblatt, he is a distinguished, donnish, left-of-center author. But the betting among people who know Fallows and Zuckerman is that this owner-editor relationship will not explode. “Jim has a lot of advantages over me, innate and experiential,” says Rosenblatt, who fought strenuously with Zuckerman before quitting, in 1989, and is now an essayist for *Time* and PBS. “Frankly, he has the advantage of my having preceded him—I died that he may live. I was a bull in an ammunition dump. If Mort felt strongly about not doing something, I did it. It was foolishness on my part. I really was inept. Also, Mort has learned a lot about running magazines. I can see it in the product.”

“Of all the things I feared when Jim took over,” one of his editors says, “it was a surprise that Jim knows how to talk to Mort. Jim has handled Mort exceptionally well.” Last fall, in the course of approving and tweaking a redesign that had been undertaken by his predecessors, Fallows decided to dump the opening “One Week” essay. A few weeks later, Zuckerman called to say that he missed “One Week.” “One Week” returned. “Yes,” Fallows says now, smiling, “and I was wrong.” As for the redesign itself—an undramatic one—Fallows apparently accepted it grudgingly. "There are parts I think are wonderful," he says, constitutionally unable to lie outright.

Under the previous regime, Zuckerman would critique each new issue with the top editors. With Fallows, critiques are more ad hoc, and may come during any of eight or ten conversations they have during a week. Fallows says his editor-in-chief seldom reads stories before they are published, and asks for changes in maybe ten per cent of those he does read. "Though, like everybody else, he's fallible, he's also an extremely smart person, whose judgment most of the time is sound," Fallows says. "Most of the suggestions make the piece stronger, and the ones I think don't make the piece stronger we talk over. Compared to a lot of owners I can think of, I find him extraordinary. He wants his publications to make money, but, even more, he wants them to be good." In the case of *The Atlantic*, Zuckerman has spent about forty million dollars so far. "I'm not a public company," Zuckerman says. "I don't need to worry about quarterly earnings, or any earnings."

Zuckerman sounds patient. Fallows does not. "This is the kind of job that can be done too long," he says. "I like the other parts of my life." Fallows's intimates would be surprised if he stayed more than five years. "I do not expect him to do it for a long period of time," Zuckerman says. When I mention the editorship of *The Atlantic*, which William Whitworth has held for the seventeen years that Zuckerman has owned the magazine, he perked up and mused, "I wonder if Fallows would like to do that at some point in his life."

Fallows won't speculate. "I don't want to encourage the philosophy of waiting me out," he says. He seems determined to succeed, undeterred by the fact that he has been cast against type, and that Beltway swells reject him. Indeed, like all good moralists, Fallows seems to have a taste for being a pariah. "There are certain people I would like to punch, but I spend zero of my time thinking about a Washington society I'm either snubbing or not snubbing," he told me. "To the extent I've thought about it—well, I would think that it's not that bad a positioning item for this magazine to have its editor reviled by the Washington establishment."

His peers in the magazine establishment don't revile him, but they don't get him, either. Walter Isaacson says, "Not doing Deng and not doing O.J."—as cover stories after the Chinese leader died and after Simpson lost the civil case—"you can argue, but Jim seems *way* off the news." Rick Smith, of *Newsweek*, thinks that news-driven cover stories are essential to "remind readers that there's a reason they get it every *week*, and not every two weeks, or every month, or every quarter."

It is Fallows's desire, of course, to bewilder the people who have produced news magazines their whole lives. *U.S. News*, he declares, "will give its main play to the stories that *it* has decided are important for its readers—not the stories that are 'out there,' or 'have momentum.' " His outsiderism and presumptively limited tenure could empower him to do more than simply make *U.S. News* not bad, a *Time* without the arts coverage, a *Newsweek* with more service pieces. If the big, well-funded rivals are the equivalents of the Democratic and Republican Parties, nominally distinct but substantively interchangeable, then the runty No. 3 might want to think of itself more thoroughly and energetically as an alternative—as a can-do third party with Fallows as its (saner, more trustworthy) Ross Perot. "According to our internal research, the biggest thing about our readers is they're independent-minded," Evans says. Many of the core readers—relatively well-to-do, skeptical, Sun Belt guys—already seem to be Perotistas by nature, and an anti-establishment, let-the-chips-fall candor ought to work better for a magazine than it has for a political movement. Before "Breaking the News," the grassroots hatred of the news media seemed mainly a matter of talk-radio ranting, reactionary and dumb. Now it's a respectable national conversation. *U.S. News* could work in an analogous fashion, taking powerful left-field sentiments seriously. "I will be perfectly comfortable, and I think Mort would be, too, if in a typical week *Time* and *Newsweek* have the same subject on their covers and we have something different," Fallows says. He doesn't even think of them as his competition, he insists.

I asked Zuckerman if he thought *Time* and *Newsweek* were the competition. "Sure," he said.

The two men disagree, but it seems to be a comfortable disagreement. Zuckerman, who has known Fallows for two decades, understood he was buying a contrarian, and Fallows confounded expectations even as the job was being offered. "To be honest with you," Zuckerman says, "I didn't think he'd take it." ♦

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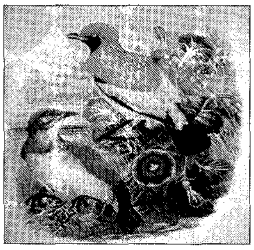
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A REPORTER AT LARGE

KENNEDY'S HIDDEN CAMPAIGN

Everyone thought that Bill Clinton had to move right to make a comeback. Except Ted Kennedy, whose behind-the-scenes role is an untold story of the election.

BY ELSA WALSH

IN the fall of 1994, Senator Edward M. Kennedy was in terrible political trouble. It was his seventh campaign for the United States Senate, and his Republican opponent, who had trailed him by as much as twenty points in midsummer, was running ahead in some polls. The Republican, Mitt Romney, who was a youthful forty-seven, was a newcomer to politics, a devout Mormon who did not smoke or drink, and a dedicated family man. Kennedy, a career politician, was grossly overweight, looked older than his sixty-two years, and, although he had remarried two years earlier, still had a reputation as a carouser. Kennedy had easily won his first six campaigns with an average of sixty-four per cent of the vote, even with the Chappaquiddick scandal, in 1969. But now, for the first time in thirty years, Kennedy feared he might lose his seat; suburban women voters, in particular, seemed fed up with him. As he sought advice on how to handle Romney, one of the friends he called on was another politician who'd had some experience with defeat—President Clinton.

In a recent telephone conversation, Clinton told me what he had told Kennedy: "I said, 'They're not going to beat you over whatever—any kind of personal criticism of you. The only way he can beat you is if he says, 'I'm a modern sort of progressive guy and Kennedy is yesterday's guy. He's the old big-government liberal.' And I said, 'What you have to do is find ways to demonstrate by the issues you advocate and the way you talk about them that you're tomorrow's candidate. Yes, you've got your Irish passion. And, yes, you still have your same values. And, yes, you're proud of everything you've done in the Senate. But what you really want to do is have six more years, because you've got other things to do. If they make sense to people, you'll win the election.' "

"And what did Kennedy say?" I asked Clinton.

"He thought that was pretty good advice. And that's what he did," Clinton said, laughing. "Basically, by the end of the election he was more future-oriented than his opponent, and I think it really helped him to win."

That November, Kennedy won a seventh term by a seventeen-point margin. Clinton, however, was humiliated in the 1994 election. Republicans won both houses of Congress, and it was the first time in forty years that the Democrats had lost the House of Representatives. The Republicans had nationalized the congressional elections, in part by portraying Clinton as a tax-and-spend liberal.

Soon it was Kennedy who was counselling Clinton not to despair. Clinton says of Kennedy that, even after the '94 election, "he was one of the first and most aggressive believers that, even if we'd lost because we were misunderstood or whatever in '94, that there was still a lot that could be done and, in some ways, the contrast had opened new avenues for accomplishment." But Kennedy offered a different kind of political advice from the kind that Clinton had offered him. Instead of emphasizing the future, Kennedy urged the President to campaign on a number of themes that had long been identified with traditional Democratic Party liberalism: protecting Medicare, Medicaid, and education, and raising the minimum wage.

In the months since November, most analyses of Clinton's reëlection victory have referred to Clinton as moving to the right to emphasize the traditional Republican issues of taxes, crime, welfare, and the federal budget. But to a considerable extent Clinton followed Kennedy's advice. He did effectively neutralize the Republican issues, but the real foundation of the winning strategy was a liberal agenda, not a conservative one. The message of the Clinton reëlection campaign—of the more than eighty-five million dollars' worth of ads that were paid for by Clinton-campaign and Democratic Party fund-raising efforts—was defined and driven by Edward M. Kennedy.

IN Washington today, Edward Moore Kennedy, who turned sixty-five last month, has been in public life for eight Presidencies. In 1962, he was elected to the United States Senate from Massachusetts when his brother John was President (completing the last two years of John Kennedy's Senate term), and he ended the sixties as the last surviving Kennedy brother: Robert Kennedy had been assassinated in 1968. In 1969, he was the driver of a car on Chappaquiddick Island in which a woman, twenty-eight-year-old Mary Jo Kopechne, was drowned in circumstances that have never been convincingly explained and that even Kennedy has called "indefensible." Kennedy waited nearly ten hours to report the accident, and his behavior may have cost not only a woman's life but his Presidential aspirations.

Nevertheless, the following year he was reëlected to the Senate, where in the seventies he became a passionate defender of liberalism, and despite the events of Chappaquiddick he was seen by many as the heir to Camelot. That longing climaxed when he tried to take the Democratic Presidential nomination from Jimmy Carter, a sitting President. He failed badly, and returned to focus on Senate business. In the eighties, he pushed through an enormous amount of major legislation. He started the nineties with another personal scandal—the 1991 trial of his nephew William Kennedy Smith, who was charged with raping a woman following a night of drinking with his uncle. But then Kennedy re-

Senator Edward Kennedy and his wife, Victoria Reggie Kennedy. "We can do this," he told Clinton, "there will be a way."

bounded once more. In 1992, at the age of sixty, he married for a second time, and he has been tending to the Senate with such vigor that Trent Lott, the putative leader of the Senate, said in the New York *Times*, "Ted Kennedy does not run the world."

Many explanations have been given for Kennedy's endurance. It doubtless helps to be a Kennedy, yet being a Kennedy does not fully explain his durability. For the last months of the 1996 legislative session, I tracked Kennedy and attended staff briefings and strategy meetings. During this period, he so dominated the political debate that, according to George Stephanopoulos, Clinton's former senior adviser, he "was a key player in every major piece of legislation that made the difference"—for Clinton—"between being elected and not." As I watched Kennedy help push legislation, block and soften what he opposed, and, in the process, drive Bob Dole from the Senate, I could see something of the thread that runs through his life, the one that enables him to endure. It is, above all, his mastery of the rules of survival, both political and personal.

"One goes through various sorts of phases in one's life whether one knows it or not," Kennedy told me one day last summer. "And this has been just an enormously different phase to me in my life, not one that you could have sort of anticipated or expected or described, but it has been a very real one and it's been a wonderful one." He said this during one of several conversations we had over nine months, and that day Kennedy wanted to talk about his personal life. He said that his marriage to the former Victoria Reggie, a lawyer twenty-two years his junior, with two children, had made him "free from a lot of other kinds of distractions" and given him a "sort of single-mindedness that was, I think, not as evidenced in another phase." He told me that in four years of marriage, he and his wife hadn't spent more than three nights apart.

For a man who has struggled with a lifelong weight problem (as a boy, he sometimes signed letters "Fat Ted"), he looked nattier and trimmer than usual—thanks, it seems, to a run on a treadmill suggested by his nephew-in-law the actor (and Republican activist) Arnold Schwarzenegger, and to a diet instituted by Vicki at the beginning of last year. He sipped clear chicken broth as we talked, and wore a handsome navy-blue suit, with a pressed handkerchief, tasselled black loafers, and, surprisingly, a gold-link bracelet. "I joke with her that when she was cooking for me when we were courting I got the tenderloin with the béarnaise sauce and the broccoli with the hollandaise and now I get the little scrod with—if I'm lucky—a little light lemon butter."

During the months when I was observing Kennedy, he usually started the day with a six-o'clock run on the treadmill. After he had breakfast with his two stepchildren at his six-and-a-half-acre estate, in McLean, Virginia (which he has since sold, for nearly six million dollars), a member of his staff would drive him to the Capitol while he conferred with an aide on the themes and focus of the day. He generally arrived at his office around eight o'clock and kept an intense schedule for the next twelve hours. He was continually rushing from briefing to hearing to Senate floor to White House phone call to meeting with an advocacy group or a foreign dignitary—for many such visitors still treat him as a shadow President. Inevitably, he paused several times a day for visitors who wanted to photograph him. He usually skipped lunch in the Senate dining room, and snacked instead, without much enjoyment, on a salad from his office refrigerator. He seemed to speak to at least a couple of family members by telephone every day, and in conversations with others he invariably referred to someone in his family—most often his children and his brother John. In the evenings, he often attended a fund-raiser or reception. Whenever he left the office, "the bag"—a briefcase stuffed with what his staff calls his homework, filed in color-coded folders, like the yellow "Must Do" folder—went with him. The bag also held a list of people to phone. For each call, the name of the recipient's spouse was included—"so if the spouse answers the phone he'd go, 'Oh, Jane. How are you?' " an aide told me. Also in the bag was a folder with about a dozen invitations selected by staff (out of hundreds that come into the office every month).

For such a public man, Kennedy can be curiously lacking in self-confidence, even socially awkward. It is as if years of being judged have made him wary. This, in turn, leads sometimes to a jumbled syntax in interviews, which disappears

"At the conclusion of this evening's concert, ladies and gentlemen, I'll thank you for not forgetting the tip jar."

with close friends or on the Senate floor, where he can speak extemporaneously and eloquently. He can also be funny (he often broke the tension in a hearing with a joke), as well as solicitous. I was pregnant, and he frequently grabbed my elbow to make sure that I was the first to enter the Senate subway or the van that shuttled him around the capital. I often learned more in those quick trips than I did in formal interviews; he seemed most relaxed while he was in motion. It did not surprise me when Kennedy, an accomplished amateur painter, said he avoided painting people, because he could not get them right. "As much as I try, I can't," he said, looking at a painting of his beloved sailboat.

"No Chiclets? When did you people stop passing out Chiclets?"

• •

THE largely unnoted 1996-election alliance between Clinton and Kennedy began on December 13, 1994, in the President's private office, in the Treaty Room on the second floor of the White House. The results of the midterm election, just over a month earlier, had spurred widespread talk of a one-term presidency and a challenge for the Democratic nomination. "He was interested in the themes that worked," Kennedy said, referring to his own recent victory.

Kennedy had prepared rigorously for the meeting. Aware that Clinton and the Democratic Party were at a turning point, he had spent the past month meeting with academics, historians, economists, and political people, exploring the broad question of what the Democratic Party's future should be. He had distilled their views and his own into a three-page memo that he planned to give to the President. It was a fighting document.

Kennedy's broader goal was to persuade Clinton that the 1994 election was not a referendum on liberalism and that Clinton did not have to move to the right if he wanted to survive, as so many Democrats were arguing. The one issue that had trumped all others in Kennedy's own campaign was economic insecurity. "The unemployment rate was high but was on its way down, but even in the places where it was going down people were underemployed and filled with anxiety and uncertainty," Kennedy told me, paraphrasing the underlying point he wanted to make to Clinton.

Although Clinton, months earlier, had counselled Kennedy not to run as an "old big-government liberal," Kennedy had gone ahead and campaigned on his liberal record. He had talked about the future, as all politicians must, but he had also portrayed himself as the champion of working families and the middle class. Clinton, he wrote in his memo, should do the same. This "is the strongest case for your presidency," the memo said. Next, Kennedy's memo stressed the need to keep the traditional Democratic base on Clinton's side, and not take it for granted: "Unions, minorities, women, gays, education groups, and the health community all worked like hell for me and helped the campaign enormously. Hard to head into 1996 without enthusiastic support of our base." Clinton, he wrote, could meanwhile pick out areas where the Republicans were perceived as extreme: "Their harshness will not wear well over time." To sharpen the contrast with the Republicans, Clinton needed to approach the budget he was about to submit to Congress as "a political document, not a policy document." Kennedy accurately predicted that Clinton might have to veto the Republicans' counterproposal if the Republicans packed their whole agenda into it, so Clinton's budget should avoid making cuts in core programs like education "which would neutralize Democrats' ability to attack expected Republican cuts in these programs."

The most important program to protect from cuts, the memo declared, was Medicare. Kennedy predicted that the Republicans would try to cut Medicare in order to balance the budget—one of the key promises in Speaker-elect Newt Gingrich's Contract with America—and to finance tax cuts. " 'No cuts to Medicare except for health-care reform' will be a great 'wedge' issue if we can keep distinction clear," Kennedy wrote. The President should also "resist all cuts in student aid." Fighting to keep higher education affordable was a great middle-class issue and contrasted starkly with Republican policies that favored the rich. "Make every dollar taken away from students a dollar taken by Republicans."

Kennedy noted that he intended to introduce a modest plan to reform health insurance in January of 1995, fulfilling a vow he had made the previous September, when Clinton's health-care plan was declared dead. Health care was potentially still one of Clinton's best issues, but "you need to get in front of it again after lies about your plan and failure to pass anything." This was a "win-win approach," the memo noted, explaining, "If the Republicans pass something, you claim credit. If they don't pass anything, you can blame them."

At the meeting, Kennedy sat in a

rose-colored wingback chair, beneath a photograph titled "The Loneliest Job in the World." The photograph, one of Clinton's favorites, shows President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in 1961, looking out the south window of the Oval Office, and the mood it conveys is sombre. Kennedy and Clinton spoke for almost an hour, despite staff interruptions informing them that Clinton was late for a Christmas party downstairs. Kennedy raised an additional point: increasing the minimum wage, which had been at four dollars and a quarter per hour since 1991, and which applied to more than ten million Americans. Increasing it, he reminded Clinton, was a fairness issue. People who work ought to make a living wage. And it was also good politics.

Clinton made no commitments, but he was heartened by Kennedy's belief that the ticket could win by concentrating on issues affecting families and children. "I was very impressed," Clinton told me. "He saw through the ebbs and flows of the debate. . . . He also believed that sooner or later, by the time we got through this budget battle, we might even be able to get health reform. He thought that there would be a real psychological burden that would shift back to the Republicans, once they won the Congress partly by attacking my health-care-reform proposals, that would make it possible."

Kennedy was determined to make good on his agenda. Clinton was the first President since his brother, Democrat or Republican, who had not regarded him with suspicion. (President Nixon went as far as to order spies planted in a Secret Service detail assigned to Kennedy, according to tapes released late last year.) And Kennedy was appreciative of the homage that Clinton had paid the Kennedy family. Jean Kennedy Smith, the Senator's sister, was Clinton's Ambassador to Ireland, and Clinton regularly invoked the Kennedy-family memory. One of Kennedy's colleagues recalls him telling Clinton, "I've waited all my political life to hear a President utter those words from this place," when Clinton announced to a joint session of Congress in 1993 his plans to fight for universal health care.

Clinton told me after the December meeting that Kennedy was far more pragmatic than his public reputation as a liberal ideologue suggested, and that he could provide critical legislative help in a way that almost no other ally could. "We're very close, and I talk to him often, and I work with him and I seek his counsel a lot," Clinton said. "In some ways, you could argue that he's virtually as effective in the minority as he is in the majority. And," he added, "you can hardly say that about anybody."

Clinton dates his political alliance with Kennedy back to 1978, when the Senator spoke at a health-care panel in Memphis which was moderated by Clinton, who was then a governor. A video of the panel, including a boyish-looking Clinton, plays in the Kennedy Presidential library in Boston. "I had a great time with him, and I loved him then," Clinton said. "I guess we kind of bonded a little bit then." But the start of the personal alliance began two years later. "When I was defeated in 1980 for governor," Clinton said, "and it looked like my whole political career was over, and people I had appointed to office in Arkansas were trying to avoid being seen in public with me, because they wanted to hang on under the new administration, Ted Kennedy was the first person who called me. The first national person in politics. The very next day. The very first person." Clinton said that Kennedy reassured him that he'd rise again, counselling, " 'Hang in there. You're young. There will be another day.' When I was reëlected in 1982, he was the first person who called me. So I'm like a lot of people around this town . . . I just feel a special attraction to him because he's always been genuine with me." Kennedy laughed warmly when I mentioned Clinton's recollection. He had just returned from New York, where he and Vicki had joined the Clintons at "21" to celebrate Chelsea Clinton's seventeenth birthday.

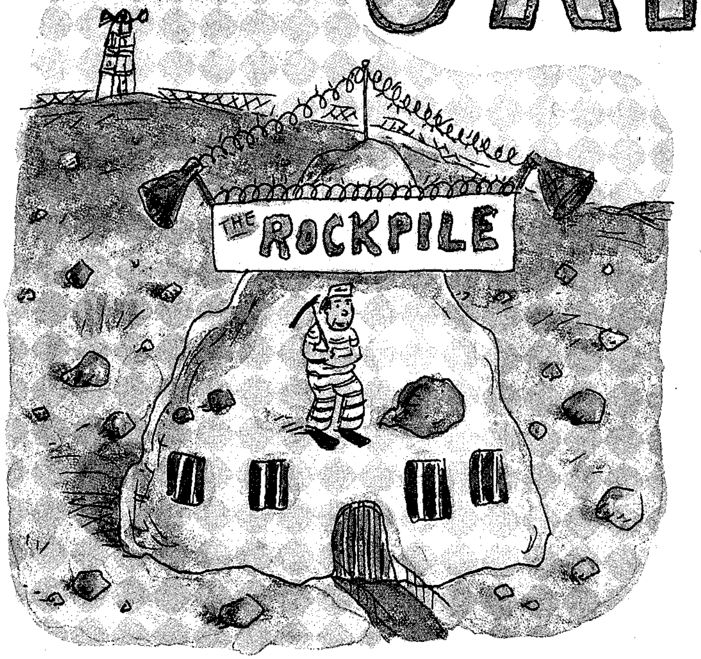
Clinton's aides said that Clinton knew that Kennedy was not going to criticize him, as other Democrats did. "The President knew that Ted Kennedy had wisdom, and that he was not attempting to hurt him," I was told late last year by Patrick Griffin, who attended the December 13th meeting and was at the time the White House's chief lobbyist in Congress. The relationship with Kennedy was different from others that Clinton had formed with members of Congress. "It's not a competitive relationship," Stephanopoulos told me. "Kennedy knows he's not going to be President. A lot of other senators don't, and a lot of other senators are bitter that they haven't gotten their chance, and are envious, and Kennedy's not. It's very liberating." Stephanopoulos went on, "I mean, the relationships Clinton has in the Senate are all of a type. You know, Breaux is his pal, his joking buddy. Pryor's his uncle." Stephanopoulos was referring to the Democratic senators from Louisiana and Arkansas. "Kennedy is— I don't even know how to put it exactly. He's sort of an elder statesman, but he's not old particularly. Well, I guess, you know what it is, it's more of a peer relationship. Being a Kennedy cancels out being President, so they can just deal with each other."

STILL, Kennedy had a hard task. The President wasn't as confident as Kennedy that the Republicans would fade. "I don't think the White House, the President, or any of us were ready" to go with Kennedy's program, Patrick Griffin said. "Nobody anticipated the Republicans being as extreme and simple-minded in their approach as they turned out to be."

Over the next few weeks, Griffin told Clinton, he should stay away from the minimum wage. Though it might be the principled step to take, Griffin said, it was ludicrous to suggest a raise in the current climate, after the G.O.P. sweep. Even Democrats in Congress were opposed to bringing it up, he told the President. Why open another front where we are sure to get clobbered? The Republicans would see the effort as an antibusiness initiative and would kill it.

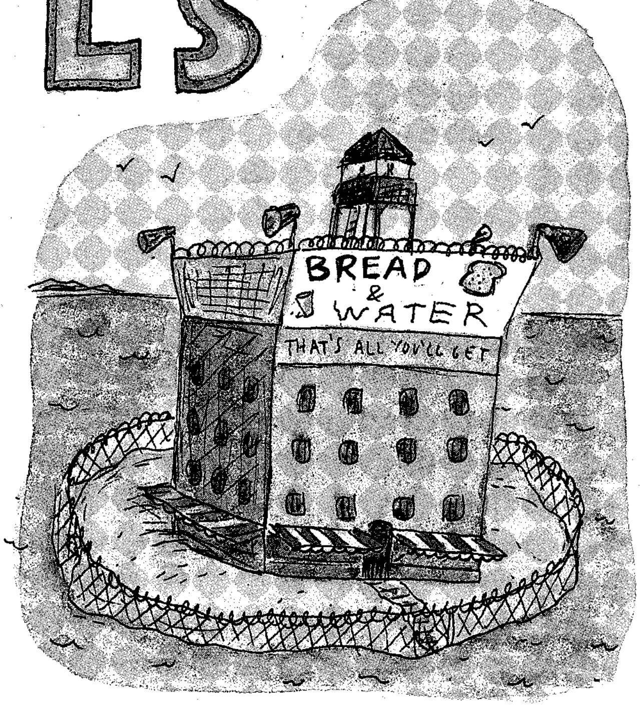
Kennedy was hearing the same thing from his Democratic colleagues, but he believed that they had lost their nerve. Kennedy is one of the few politicians who know that they can get media coverage when they need it. On January 11, 1995, the day he formally introduced his legislation to increase the minimum wage, Kennedy gave a speech and spoke harshly of Democrats who blamed Clinton for the midterm elections. "What was happening is the Democrats, many were sort of looking out after their own political futures rather than trying to see what was going to be the best in terms of a political movement," Kennedy explained to me. His good friend Senator Christopher Dodd, of Connecticut, told me, "Teddy constantly has to sort of in his own way remind people why they are associated

PRIVATE-SECTOR JAILS


THE ROCKPILE

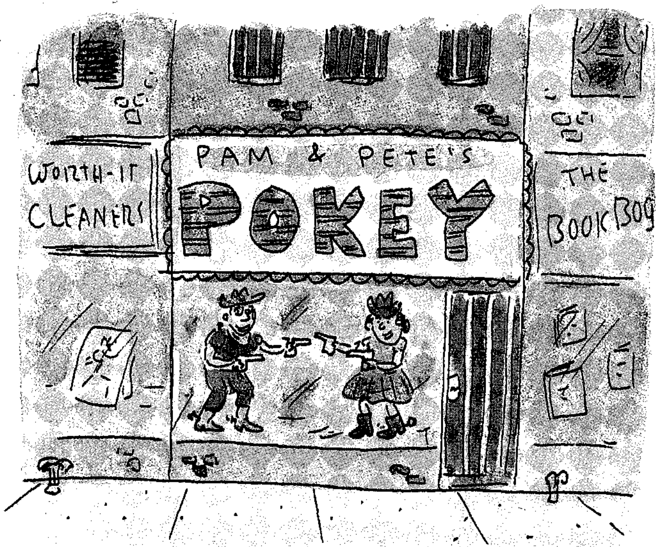
Some slammers offer a smorgasbord of time-filling activities. At The Rockpile, it's just boulder breakage- and *plenty of it!*

Located just off Highway 97, Millview Falls.


BREAD & WATER
THAT'S ALL YOU'LL GET

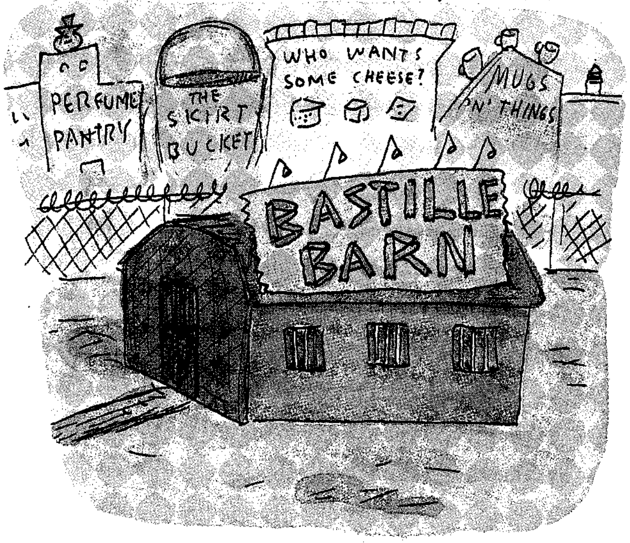
Looks like a diner, but don't let that fool you- it's actually a maximum-security prison!

Located on Botkin's Island, Maine.


WORTH-IT CLEANERS
PAM & PETE'S
POKEY
THE BOOK BOG

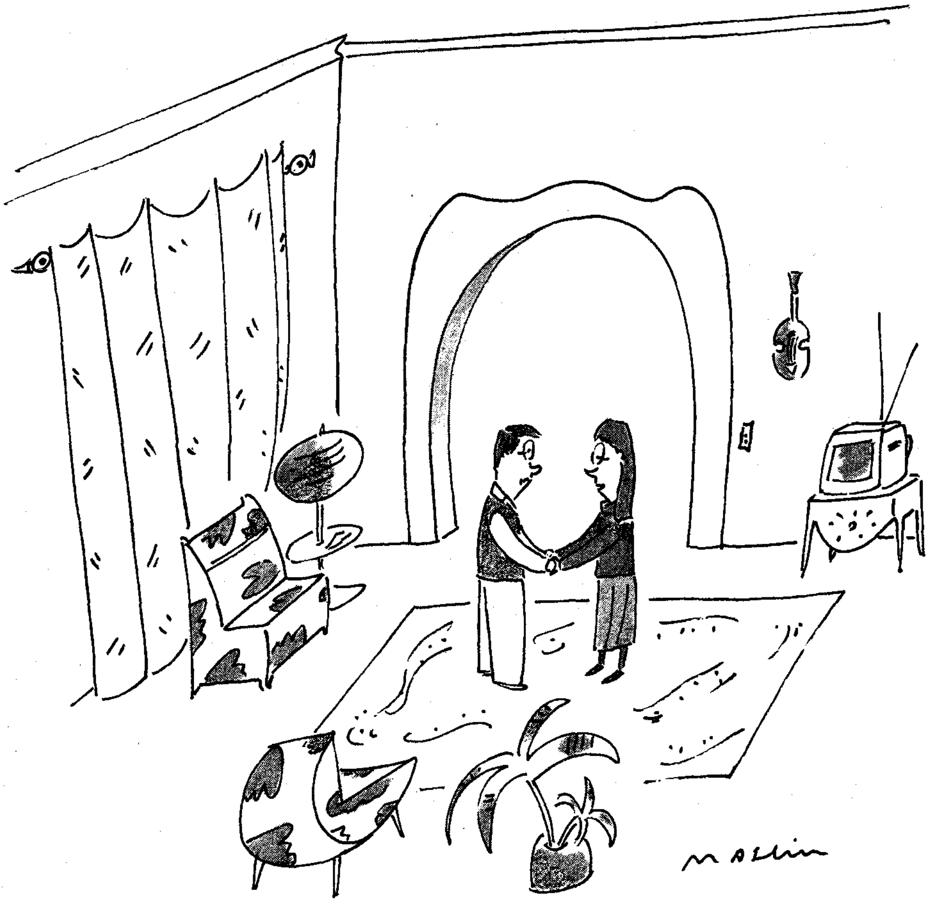
A really special place to pay one's debt to society. So c'mon in- we're SECURE inside.

Located between Worth-It Cleaners and The Book Bog.


PERFUME PANTRY
THE SKIRT BUCKET
WHO WANTS SOME CHEESE?
MUGS 'N' THINGS
BASTILLE BARN

Top correction at rock-bottom prices. Short or long stays easily accommodated. *C'est magnifique!*

Located in Factory Outlet Village Mall.



"Although my feelings for you are simulated, you'll find they have the look and the touch of genuine feelings."

with the party they're associated with. He has to start it. Without him, it wouldn't get going."

Eleven days after Kennedy's speech, Rose Kennedy, who had been ill for some time, died in Hyannis Port, at the age of a hundred and four. Clinton called Kennedy that night to offer his sympathies. "He was very close to his mother, and he basically was the caretaker of the family in many ways for many years," Clinton told me. "We talked about his mother, and what kind of woman she was, and what she'd meant to him. She was a remarkable person." Before hanging up, Clinton told Kennedy he had decided to mention the minimum wage the next day, in the State of the Union address. "I just knew it would be an uphill battle in that Congress," Clinton told me. "And I just said, 'Well, maybe at the end of the road we'll be able to get it because they'll want something I'll have to give them.' But he said, 'No, no, we can do this. . . . There will be a way.' "

After Kennedy returned to Washington following his mother's funeral, he requested time to address the Democratic congressional leaders. He had been instructed by the leadership to arrive midway through the early-morning leadership meeting on January 31st, and as he entered room H-201, on the second floor of the House side of the Capitol, a heated discussion was under way among sixteen or so of the participants. "Numbers of them are saying things like, 'No, no, we can't possibly do it. It's a poor person's program. It's going to wreck us as Democrats. We didn't get the message of the election,' " Nick Littlefield, Kennedy's top domestic adviser, who accompanied him, recalls.

Still affected by his mother's death, Kennedy erupted. "What are we?" he shouted, and he launched into what Littlefield terms a ten-minute tirade: "We're Democrats," Littlefield recalls him saying. "How can we possibly say this? This is core Democratic material. This is our people. These are working people. These are the people we've got to fight for." Kennedy was on a real tear—"full volume, and it's not that big a room, and the room's pretty crowded," Littlefield says. "Everyone is taken aback and then he stops and the air is all sucked out of the room and there's a sort of silence for a moment and then everyone says, 'Wheeewww!' " Someone made a joke to let the pressure out of the room, and Kennedy left soon after.

Just days later, Kennedy had brokered a compromise, which he says took some "pulling and hauling." On February 13th, Clinton, with the support of the Democratic leadership, asked Congress to raise the minimum wage by ninety cents, to five dollars and fifteen cents.

"I didn't intend to lecture any colleagues," Kennedy told me this summer, a slight smile creasing his face. "But they had to understand that this was going to move ahead, move ahead, and they were going to either have to become a part of it or . . . against it." With some of these issues, "you believe in them and feel them, and you ought to fight for them."

As Kennedy had recommended, Clinton had left Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security untouched in the budget that he submitted to Congress in February of 1995. But the real debate centered on the Republican proposal to balance the budget in seven years, and Kennedy privately worried that Clinton, in an effort to make a gesture to the Republicans, would compromise and propose cuts of his own.

Whenever Clinton hinted that he was thinking about going along with balancing the budget by a specific deadline—which would almost guarantee some cuts in the programs that Kennedy had urged preserving—Kennedy called the White House. He thought Medicare was the issue that could ultimately destroy the whole Republican agenda. The Republicans had proposed cutting the growth of Medicare by two hundred and seventy billion dollars over seven years—about the same amount as their proposed tax cuts. In the public's eye the two would be linked. Sometimes when he called the White House, he spoke with Clinton. "If he thinks I'm wrong or if he wants me to do something I'm not doing, he is extremely aggressive," Clinton told me. Griffin recalls Kennedy saying, "You guys are fucking up." Kennedy argued strenuously that Clinton should not offer the

Republicans concessions. Make the Republicans pay the price.

By early June, Clinton had dropped yet another hint that he could balance the budget in less than ten years and Kennedy decided he needed to make another private appeal. He ordinarily had no trouble making appointments to see Clinton, but this time the door seemed closed, leading to speculation among Kennedy's aides that Clinton's staff did not want Kennedy agitating the President. On June 8th, Kennedy decided he could wait no longer. He had been invited that day to a White House ceremony on the South Lawn, where Clinton was scheduled to swear in new police officers mandated under a crime bill. Kennedy seldom attended such ceremonial functions, but this time he sat in the front row. After the speech, Clinton spotted Kennedy and waved him to the podium. One Kennedy aide recalls, "Everything was working just as planned, and the staff is fuming around the outside of this event, which is down at the far end of the White House lawn." Clinton invited Kennedy back to the Oval Office.

The two talked for about an hour, during which Kennedy made two basic arguments. He told Clinton it made no sense to make a concession to the Republicans at the outset, because that would weaken his bargaining position. And as a political tactic, Kennedy said, it would demoralize their allies. "At the heart of this was whether we should move toward some kind of accommodation toward the Republicans or whether we ought to stand our ground," Kennedy told me.

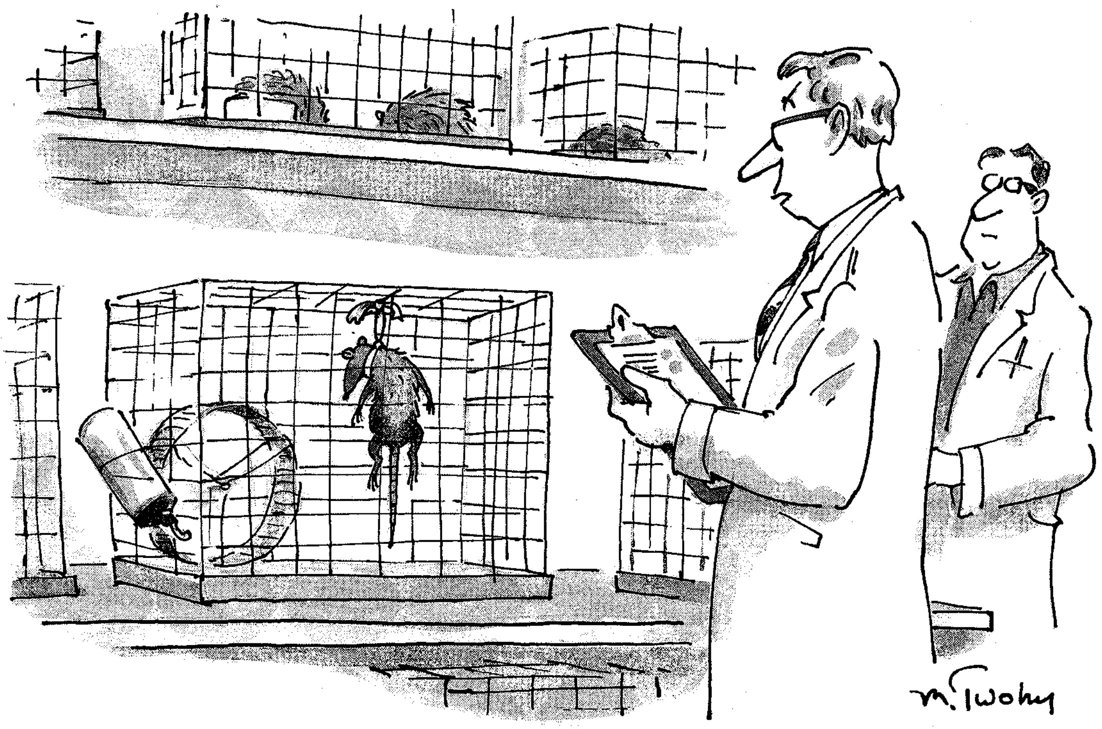
"I argued two things," Clinton said, recalling his response. "First of all, I argued that I could produce a balanced budget which would be a progressive one, and that the economy was much better, and that people were beginning to feel it was better, because we had the guts to pass that program in '93 that only Democrats would vote for." Clinton said he also told Kennedy, "When you're the chief executive, you have to make the choices, a lot of them, on the front end. You can't just do it all at the end."

Five days later, on June 13th, Clinton made a nationally televised address calling for a balanced budget in ten years. He said his plan would avoid cuts in education, strengthen Medicare, save Medicaid, cut taxes for the middle class, and protect the environment. His proposal included a decrease in anticipated spending of about a hundred and twenty-four billion dollars on Medicare, which was about half the amount that the latest Republican proposals put forward. Kennedy was appalled, but also relieved. The cuts were less than he'd feared.

Kennedy kept quiet about his reservations, but Clinton's proposal was causing a virtual insurrection among other congressional Democrats. "Most of us learned some time ago that if you don't like the President's position on a particular issue, you simply need to wait a few weeks," Representative David Obey of Wisconsin said. Kennedy was not going to jeopardize his relationship with Clinton. "I agree with the President's direction and where he's trying to go with the country and what he's trying to do with the economy and his priorities in education and health and the environment," he told me. "I believe he's staying the course on affirmative action, and he was courageous on guns. . . . So we're going to have some differences along the way, but I mean that's the way this process ought to work."

Kennedy's silence did not go unnoted, and in politics silence can sometimes be loyalty. "That meant a lot to me," Clinton told me. "Everybody knows that one good way to be quoted in this town is to hit the President, whether he's of your party or another party."

FOR a few months after Clinton announced that he, too, favored a balanced budget, Kennedy continued to support him in public and to lambaste the Republican budget proposal. "This is a budget that Marie Antoinette would love—'Let them eat cake,' " he said on the Senate floor on June 23rd. "And it is Medicare that is being sent to the guillotine." But privately he continued to monitor the White House position on Medicare. He felt a little more reassured when, in the fall, Clinton started running tough ads on the Republicans' Medicare proposals. But Kennedy also knew that some Presidential advisers were pushing Clinton to reach a deal with the Republicans on the budget. "He insisted on having a very, very, very clear difference on Medicare," Stephanopoulos said of Kennedy, who called him frequently during this period. Stephanopoulos found the calls useful and quickly reported each of them to Clinton. Clinton, Stephano-



"Discouraging data on the antidepressant."

poulos said, was aware that to push Kennedy too far could be dangerous. "The President loses Kennedy. Who was the last Democratic President who lost Kennedy?" Stephanopoulos asked, referring to Jimmy Carter. "A Democrat can't win if you lose Kennedy."

In the late fall of 1995, the federal government shut down when Clinton and the Republicans failed to reach agreement on the budget. Clinton was winning the public-relations war, but Kennedy knew it wouldn't last long. Kennedy also knew that while he himself was telling Clinton he didn't need to sign the Republican budget plan to win the election, Clinton's strategist Dick Morris was telling him he'd lose in 1996 if he didn't. On December 6, 1995, Clinton vetoed the G.O.P. budget, using the same pen that President Lyndon Johnson had used to sign Medicare into law.

"Kennedy was right," Stephanopoulos says.

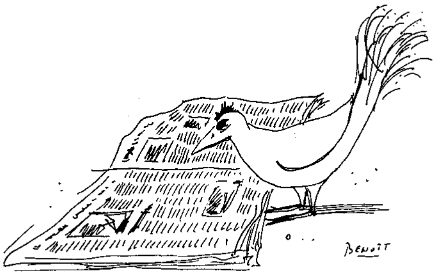
A couple of months later, on Kennedy's sixty-fourth birthday, Clinton inscribed a photograph, "Thanks for your friendship and for not losing heart this last year when so many did."

KENNEDY'S advice in 1995 represented bald political strategy, but it is more than that. Kennedy's liberalism is a political religion, of a kind not otherwise found in politics today. Even the language he uses belongs to the sixties and the seventies: he talks of "core values of the Democratic Party"; "the heart of the Party"; "a political movement." Time and again, he is asked to take the lead on or weigh in on a controversial issue generally viewed as liberal—or too liberal. In mid-July of 1996, at one staff briefing on the National Institutes of Health budget, Kennedy asked whether his staff had any luck in persuading Senator Barbara Mikulski, the Maryland Democrat, to offer an amendment involving fetal-tissue research. "She said she would get excommunicated if she made one more statement on fetal-tissue research," David Nexon, his top health aide, replied. Kennedy smiled and remarked, "She hasn't spoken on single-sex marriages yet." None of the other Democrats on his committee were willing to be the primary movers, either, Nexon said, adding, "You really should do it." Kennedy nodded.

In our conversations, I always tried to ask what drove Kennedy's beliefs—why a man raised in privilege would care about these issues.

Kennedy tends to dart away from introspective questions. But in our last conversation I tried again, and he said, "The people who did the most for working families were Franklin Roosevelt—he came from a more privileged position—and, I think, also John Kennedy," he replied. "I think we've seen historically that what motivates people is sort of a life experience. But there are many factors in that life experience. And we grew up in a climate and atmosphere with my grandfather talking about these matters to me as a child, exposing me to what was happening," he went on, referring to his grandfather John F. Fitzgerald, a former mayor of Boston. Kennedy had told me earlier that he used to take the subway into Boston every Sunday to have lunch with "Grampa" at the Bellevue Hotel when he was an eleven-year-old student in boarding school, having left London, where his father was the United States Ambassador at the beginning of the Second World War. "The first thing he'd do was to take me into the kitchen so I'd meet everybody in the kitchen. He knew the name of everybody." The people in the kitchen, his grandfather reminded him, were the people who had got them where they were.

A NEW phase in Kennedy's life began in 1991, a year before Clinton defeated George Bush, after what Kennedy calls "the whole Florida incident" but nearly everyone close to Kennedy simply refers to as "Palm Beach." To them no additional description is needed. His nephew William Kennedy Smith was arrested for—and later acquitted of—raping a woman on the night of Good Friday, following a trip to a bar with the Senator and his son, Patrick. At Smith's trial, Kennedy testified to rousing both his nephew and his son from their beds shortly before midnight, asking them to go with him. He said, "I wish I'd gone for a long walk on the beach, instead."



Kennedy said that he'd known nothing about the sexual episode, and he was not charged with any crime, but the incident reinforced a public image of Kennedy as the dissolute leader of a pack, who still had not learned to control his appetites even twenty-two years after Chappaquiddick. "TEDDY'S SEXY ROMP," one New York tabloid headline said, and the incident was an instant staple of late-night television skits and monologues. Kennedy's reputation was seriously tarnished. Cameramen pursued him wherever he went and even the normally sympathetic Boston *Globe* published an opinion piece predicting an end to Kennedy's career, because "people have grown tired of a man who is out of control." Later that year, his relative silence during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment against the U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas would raise questions about whether Kennedy's extracurricular behavior was interfering with his public work.

A few weeks after the incident, Kennedy called Senator Orrin Hatch, the conservative Mormon from Utah, to talk things over, and asked to meet with him. Hatch and Kennedy had become, despite serious ideological differences, close friends in the years after Hatch, a Republican, took over as chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, in 1981. Even though the Republicans had won the Senate that year, with Ronald Reagan's victory, Hatch knew that Kennedy, the committee's ranking Democrat, held the real balance of power, because the committee included two moderate Republicans, who were often more likely to vote with Kennedy than against him. Hatch approached Kennedy and told him that he could not be successful without his help. Hatch said he expected Kennedy to laugh. Instead, Hatch recalled, Kennedy said, " 'I can't help you on some things, you know that.' And I said, 'Yeah, I know that.' He said, 'But I'll try and help on others.' And he bent over backwards to do it. You know, we passed some of the most important legislation in history in those six years."

But it was not only Kennedy's legislative accommodation that surprised Hatch. "I am a good family man. I really believe in what I do, and so forth, but he makes me ashamed of myself sometimes.

He drops everything for his sister and his family and his mother. I saw him drop everything to do what he needed to do for that family."

Hatch knew that the drinking escapade in Palm Beach had followed a long conversation Kennedy had had with his sister about Stephen Smith, her late husband, who had died the previous August. Kennedy had thought of him as another brother. "He was devastated by his death, and I lived through these things with him," Hatch told me. After the events in Palm Beach, Hatch at first tried joking with Kennedy, saying, "You know, Ted, if you keep getting into trouble like this I'm just going to send the Mormon Mission after you." And, Hatch recalled, "he didn't bat an eye. He just looked down at the floor and said, 'I'm just about ready for them.' " Hatch sensed an opportunity to help. "You know, Ted, it's time for you to grow up," he recalled saying. "You're the leading liberal in this country, and you're acting like a little teen-age kid." He said he went on to tell Kennedy that he had to quit "being the kind of good-time-Charlie playboy that he was. . . . 'You represent a lot of people, and you can do an awful lot of good.' "

At that, Kennedy looked stricken, but, Hatch said, he decided to bring up Kennedy's drinking, even though he'd heard that Kennedy hadn't spoken for years to one old friend and former senator who broached the question. "But I thought, Heck, I'm his friend. I'm going to tell him. So I said, 'Ted, you know what you gotta do, don't you?' And he said, 'What?' I said, 'You've got to stop drinking.' And part of that was mischievous on my part, because I knew how hard it would be for him because I reason he enjoys it." Kennedy looked down at the floor again, Hatch said. "His big Irish face got all red, his eyes kind of all teary-eyed. And he looked at the floor and he said, 'I know,' in the most mournful way you ever heard."

Hatch said, "I think he realized that there are things in this life that are more important than anything else. And his reputation's one of them. . . . I think the thing that really made the complete turn for him was maybe people like myself who were encouraging him, but literally it was when he fell in love with Vicki."

Later, in the 1994 Senate race, Mitt Romney asked Hatch to campaign for him, Hatch told me; several Republican Senate leaders also asked him to do so. Kennedy's rival was an old friend and a fellow-Mormon, but Hatch said no.

"I've been saving this baby for the stock market."

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THERE is a difference between a busy life, which Kennedy had, and a full one, and Kennedy's friends had noticed for some time that he appeared to long for a close relationship. Bob Shrum, who is one of the smartest liberal political consultants in Washington and is a good friend of Kennedy's, recalled how Kennedy invited him to dinner one night. Shrum arrived expecting to find the usual group of about six, but it was just the two of them. "So we have this dinner and we have all this nice small talk and then we go in the living room, and I think we got a Scotch or something, and he said, 'I think you ought to marry Marylouise,' " Shrum told me, referring to Marylouise Oates, a writer, who is now his wife. Shrum said his response was "What?" Kennedy repeated his statement—"I think you ought to marry Marylouise"—and went on, "You're in love with her. You're very happy. You're happier than I've ever seen you and I don't want to see you make a mistake here. I think you ought to marry her." Kennedy paused for a minute and then said, "You know, it's wonderful when you find someone you're really in love with. I've always hoped that that would someday happen to me."

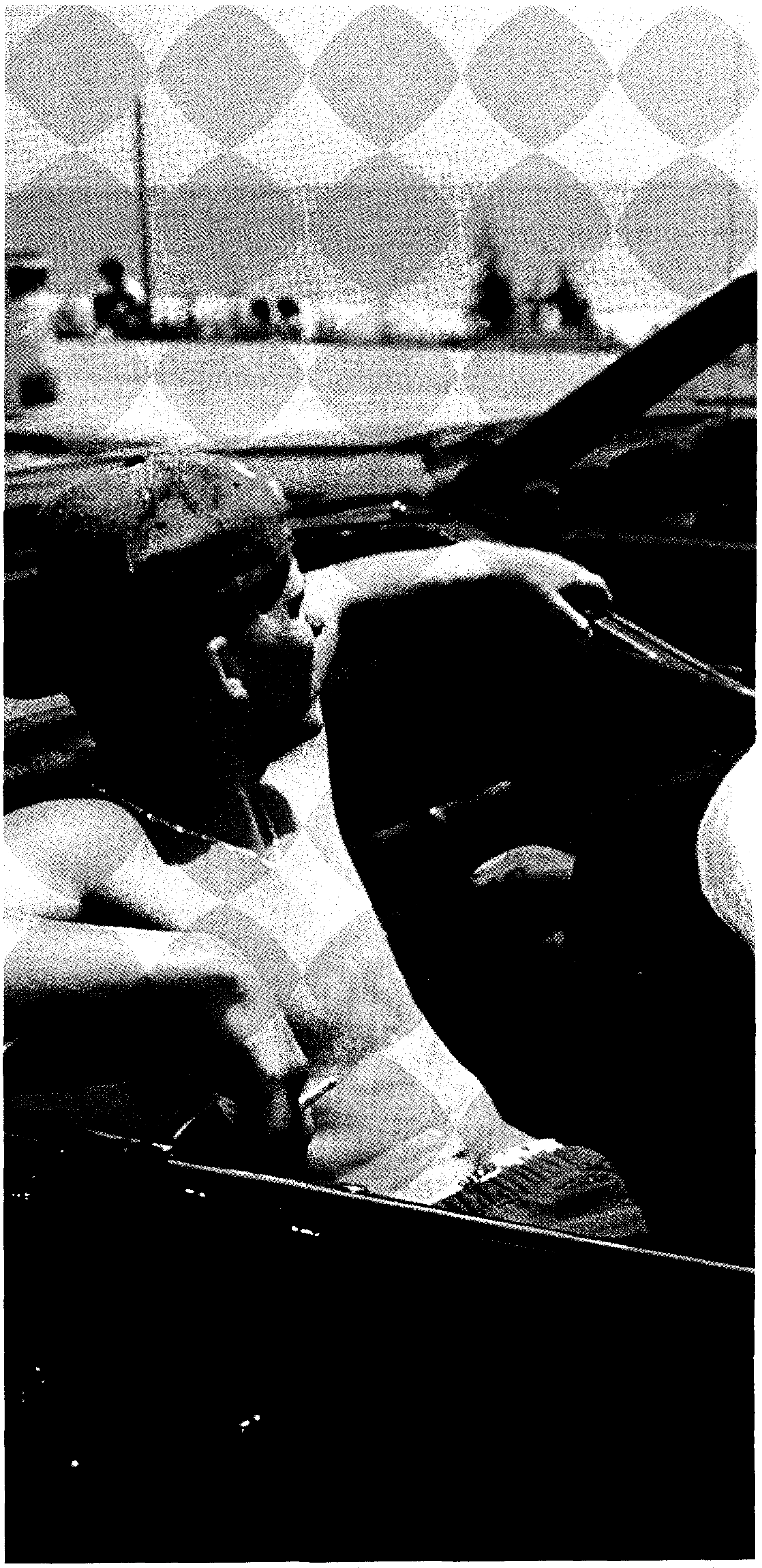
Tim Hanan, a friend and law-school classmate, who had noticed a similar yearning, told me, "He looked at those of us who developed strong, long-term relationships with an appreciation for their value. He had any number of times expressed to me how lucky I was." It wasn't that he lacked for female companionship;

he had a reputation as a roué, and many of the most unflattering news stories about him involved women, some quite young. Other women, whom he dated publicly, seemed attracted to his "star factor," Hanan said. Kennedy told the *Times* that he had not thought he'd ever remarry. "The people who had been closest to me over the course of my life had disappeared, with that enormous amount of emotion and feeling and love. I thought I probably wouldn't want to go through that kind of experience again," he explained on that occasion. Reminders of his brothers piled up in a never-ending series of commemorations. At a lunch celebrating the anniversary of the Peace Corps, which had been started by his brother John, Kennedy gathered up his papers and was unable to finish the speech he was delivering, because he was crying. "The scar tissue has been ripped asunder. It's thinner and thinner," one of his closest aides said. "It hasn't ever been able to heal properly, because of the constant reminders."

Even the women he dated or tried to date detected a certain fatigue. One former congressional staffer told me that she turned down Kennedy's invitation to dinner, telling him, "I don't have affairs." Without missing a beat, he asked her to

LOST IN L.A.

For four years, the photojournalist Lauren Greenfield immersed herself in the numerous youth cultures of her home town, Los Angeles, venturing from the affluent proms of her own Westside to the hip-hop, tagger-crew scenes of Compton and Southeast L.A. She met kids like Adam, who celebrated his bar mitzvah at the Whisky A Go Go, and Erin, whose social life consisted of drinking, dropping acid, and "tweaking" on crystal meth. The results of her researches are collected in her first book, "Fast Forward: Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood," due out from Knopf in May; a show of the photographs opens at I.C.P. Midtown in late April. Mijanou, who is shown at right on Senior Beach Day, was homecoming queen at Beverly Hills High School. But she grew up in Costa Rica, where, according to her, childhood lasts longer: "You grow up really fast when you grow up in L.A."



lunch, she said, and she accepted. They met in his Senate hideaway office and talked about growing up Irish Catholic. She said he kept calling her, but she put him off. "It was not about sex but a growing sense of loneliness," she told me. "It was not personalized. It was the same rap. The same banter."

Two months after the Palm Beach incident, Edmund and Doris Reggie, Louisiana natives, were in Washington visiting their daughter, Vicki, and they suggested inviting their old friend Ted Kennedy to dinner. Edmund Reggie, a retired judge and prominent Louisiana Democrat, had managed the state Presidential campaigns of all three Kennedy brothers. Doris Reggie, a Democratic National Committee member, had cast her vote for Ted Kennedy for the nomination during the 1980 Democratic Convention even after Kennedy released his delegates to Jimmy Carter. The Reggies saw Kennedy with some regularity, but Vicki, who was thirty-seven and had been divorced for about a year, did not, even though she had lived in Washington since 1981 and had interned in Kennedy's Senate office the summer after she graduated from college, in 1976.

The weeks since Palm Beach had been enormously difficult and Kennedy was relieved to find the small group at the dinner rather than the expected large crowd. He helped Vicki pick vegetables from her garden for the salad and stood in the kitchen while she cooked. The next day, Kennedy called and asked her to dinner.

"I was shocked. I mean, I wasn't expecting it at all," she told me as we sat in a small Italian restaurant not far from her Washington law firm's offices. She is a tall, attractive woman with the dark coloring of her Lebanese ancestry. She graduated second in her class from Tulane Law School and seems to have complete self-confidence. "I didn't think it was a business dinner. But I didn't think of it as a romantic date." He called again, and in the course of the summer they continued to see each other, though without making any commitment. Vicki's two children, then seven and five, and her work kept her busy; her divorce had been a bitter one, and the idea of remarriage was not high on her list.

Still, she grew increasingly comfortable with Kennedy. He shielded himself from most people, with a veneer of good cheer, but he demonstrated a curiosity about her life and work that she found attractive. He would help her cook dinner and then assist her children with their homework. "He's unbelievable with children," she told me. "There's a magic quality—a very special quality that he has." Many other people have told me that Kennedy can mesmerize a roomful of children, telling stories and imitating animals. Even in the worst years of his marriage to Joan, he was a dedicated father to their three children. During my initial interview with Kennedy, one of the first items he showed me on his Senate-office wall was a series of cards painted for him by Vicki's daughter. "This is from my little daughter Caroline," he said, and went into a long anecdote about how she had helped him with a painting.

One night, Vicki recalls, Kennedy called her and said he wouldn't make it to dinner because of late business in the Senate. "And I just thought, Oh my, I really miss this person. Am I falling in love? You know, one of those revelations. I think that was probably it for me."

Around this time, his political advisers were urging him to talk to Massachusetts voters, who were becoming increasingly distressed by his behavior. On October 25, 1991, seven months after the Palm Beach incident, Kennedy flew to Boston to deliver what was billed as a major speech that would address his personal problems. One aide and Vicki accompanied him. The speech was primarily political, but one short section received most of the attention. "I recognize my own shortcomings—the faults in the conduct of my private life," he said in part. "I realize that I alone am responsible for them, and I am the one who must confront them. Today, more than ever before, I believe that each of us as individuals must not only struggle to make a better world, but to make ourselves better, too." He continued, "I have been given many gifts. . . . Not least, unlike my brothers, I have been given length of years and time. And, as I approach my sixtieth birthday, I am determined to give all that I have to advance the causes for which I have stood for almost a third of a century."

The speech, delivered at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, was the start of the Senator's political rehabilitation. Kennedy did not explain Vicki's presence, or its significance, but it seemed that to him she represented a personal transformation. She, too, was someone who knew about family troubles. Her father was awaiting trial on federal charges of misapplying the funds of a failed sav-

LINES

While talking to my mother I neaten things. Spines of books by the phone.
Paper clips
in a china dish. Fragments of eraser that dot the desk. She speaks
longingly
of death. I begin tilting all the paper clips in the other direction.
Out
the window snow is falling straight down in lines. To my mother,
love
of my life, I describe what I had for brunch. The lines are falling
faster
now. Fate has put little weights on the ends (to speed us up) I
want
to tell her—sign of God's pity. She won't keep me (she is
saying)
won't run up my bill. Miracles slip past us. The
paper clips
are immortally aligned. God's pity! How long
will
it feel like burning, said the child trying to be
kind.

—Anne Carson

ings and loan in Louisiana. (He was later convicted on one count; in exchange for having the remaining charges dismissed, he pleaded no contest to one other count and was sentenced to a hundred and twenty days' house detention.) Vicki shared Kennedy's political ideology; she could advise him; and she made him laugh. Six days after the Harvard speech, on the day that jury selection in his nephew's rape trial began, Kennedy took Vicki's two children trick-or-treating.

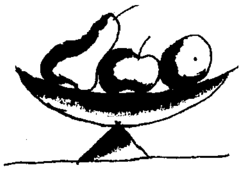
At Easter, they went snorkeling in St. Croix. "There's a wonderful national park down there, an underwater park in St. Croix. And so we had gone around to see all this underwater coral and all the rest of it, so I asked her to follow me over to an area," Kennedy said, clearly relishing his story. Kennedy had put an engagement ring on a coral bed. He pointed toward it, but, he said, she thought he was showing her a huge fish. He indicated she should swim down to get a closer look, but she was not keen on diving with her snorkel. "I saw this big fish, a grouper, going down there, sort of headed toward her," Kennedy went on. "And I said, 'My God, if that fish eats that ring I'll be certifiable,' not knowing that I'm putting a shiny sparkling thing down there that could attract a fish." He kept motioning and she dived.

"It was the most romantic thing," she recalled. "And it fit." Kennedy and Vicki married on July 3, 1992, in an unannounced ceremony at Kennedy's home, with only their immediate families present. Kennedy gave her a painting of daffodils he had made for her. He gave a copy to each of the guests inscribed with a couplet from William Wordsworth: "And then my heart with pleasure fills / And dances with the daffodils."

That Vicki would be a political partner as well as a wife became apparent during Kennedy's 1994 campaign. She reviewed television ads and speeches, edited some, and wrote others. "She was very much involved in every kind of decision," Kennedy told me. "As a strategist and a tactician she was excellent. . . . She can listen to me talk with people and talk with their parents, and then go in that other room and write a talk . . . and it'll be as good a speech as you'll ever see in your life." What was more, he said, she anchored him. On the days Vicki remained in Washington, Kennedy would catch a late flight from Boston and then fly back in the morning. He did not want to be alone.

Kennedy, in his strategy memo for Clinton, had predicted that the Republican majority would not wear well, but he was still surprised that the conservative agenda had weakened so early. The public blamed the Republicans for shutting down the federal government, and then Pat Buchanan turned the 1996 Republican Presidential primaries into a debate about wage stagnation and economic insecurity—Kennedy's issues. "He was tapping that nerve, I think, of anxiety, which is very, very much out there—and getting a response," Kennedy said. In politics, timing is everything, and in early 1996 Kennedy had decided to press for health-insurance reform and an increase in the minimum wage. Both pieces of legislation, which he had introduced the previous year, were stalled—in large part by the politics of Bob Dole's Presidential bid. But by the end of the session Kennedy had used those issues to give Clinton two of his biggest successes and also to make the Senate so hostile to Dole's campaign that Dole resigned his seat.

"I think there were powerful forces who could have seen it sink, really right up to the end," Kennedy said, explaining his next move. He called Clinton. Would Clinton mention the new health-insurance-reform bill in his State of the Union address at the end of January? The legislation, which Kennedy had drafted with Senator Nancy Kassebaum, of Kansas, would make health insurance portable, guaranteeing that an estimated twenty-five million Americans who lost or changed jobs could keep their insurance even if they were sick. It was a modest step, and Kennedy, who had been fighting for universal health-care coverage since 1970, had surprised the moderate Kassebaum by his willingness to accept so little. But after the Clinton health-care fiasco of 1994 Kennedy had been determined to be ruthlessly pragmatic. "The real question was whether you could get something that was significant enough and could be meaningful as to be really worthy of the whole effort," Kennedy told me. He believed they had, and in August, 1995, the measure had sailed unanimously through committee. But the bill had been languishing and it looked as if Dole were going to allow it to die without a vote.



Half an hour before the scheduled delivery of the State of the Union address, Senator Kassebaum learned that Clinton would mention the measure. Kassebaum, who was retiring and wanted to leave this bill as one of her legacies, was afraid that a Presidential mention in a campaign year would make it harder to hold Republican support. She called the White House. "I thought, Oh, my goodness, that's just not going to help at all," she said to me one day in her Senate office. Her call, it turned out, was too late; Clinton was already on his way to the Capitol. "Over the past two years, over one million Americans in working families have lost their health insurance," Clinton said midway through the speech as the audience rose to its feet in rare bipartisan applause. "Congress should start by passing the bipartisan bill sponsored by Senator Kennedy and Senator Kassebaum."

Kennedy was thrilled. He told the usually soft-spoken Kassebaum that they had to take advantage of the moment. Time was running out. "It was just essential that we remain together," Kennedy told me. As for Kassebaum, Clinton's mention "started the whole ball rolling," she said. "It worked." She began complaining about the Senate's inaction, and news stories began appearing. Kennedy called reporters, pointing out inconsistencies on the issue by Bob Dole: a 1994 plan that Dole had proposed as an alternative to Clinton's had supported the very same provisions. It's a drop in the bucket compared to what we tried to get two years ago, Kennedy said, in effect, and he asked how Dole could be against it when he was running for President. Kennedy and Kassebaum privately warned Dole that they would bring up the legislation as an amendment to every single bill, regardless of its subject, unless he scheduled it for a vote. Within days, Dole had scheduled the measure.

After Dole's big victory in South Carolina on March 2nd, he was well on his way to winning the Republican nomination; he returned to the Senate. "The Rotunda strategy," as his Senate aides called it, would quickly show that Dole, unlike the President, could get things done. Here Kennedy and the White House saw a clear opening. Because Dole was now the presumptive nominee, the Presidential race, at least momentarily, would be fought in the Senate, and Ted Kennedy was the point man.

"We knew as South Carolina ended and Dole went back to the Senate that that was our moment, and who better to have on your side on the floor than a man who's been in the Senate for thirty-five years?" Stephanopoulos said, referring to Kennedy.

Part of the White House strategy, coordinated with Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle on almost a daily basis, was to embarrass Dole—to show that he was not the leader he was reputed to be, and to continue to characterize the Republicans as mean. Kennedy liked and respected Dole, and over the years he had come to trust that on important legislation Dole would ultimately do the right thing. But Kennedy wanted Clinton in the White House, and he saw the minimum-wage issue as an opportunity, second only to Medicare, for a debate about whose side the political parties were on. "It was the perfect thing to kind of bring up and knock 'em around the ears with," said Patrick Griffin, the former White House lobbyist. More than eighty per cent of Americans now supported an increase, according to polling, and the plan was for Kennedy to try to offer the wage increase as an amendment to every bill. "We wanted to make sure that, no matter what Dole tries to do, we're going to . . . keep talking about it until they give it to us," Stephanopoulos said. If Dole, under pressure to prove his conservative credentials, still refused to bring up the measure for a vote, Kennedy could force him to spend a lot of time explaining his opposition. And, of course, if Dole surrendered, Clinton would have just the sort of feel-good bill-signing ceremony that Dole was trying to avoid.

"That issue is not going to go away," Kennedy warned the Senate on April 16th, when Dole halted work on important immigration legislation in order to prevent a vote on the minimum-wage amendment. That contretemps landed Dole on the front page of the *Times*. "Mr. Dole appeared flummoxed by how to deal with the issue of raising the minimum wage," the newspaper reported. Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager, said Dole told him, "We're getting killed."

Two days later, Kennedy was after Dole again, but this time it was on the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. Dole wanted to add a controversial amendment to the legislation, allowing tax-free medical savings accounts. Kennedy was opposed, and so was Kassebaum, because such accounts would undermine the core principle of health insurance, which is to pool risk. He argued that only the rich and healthy could afford them, while most sick people would be left in traditional insurance plans.

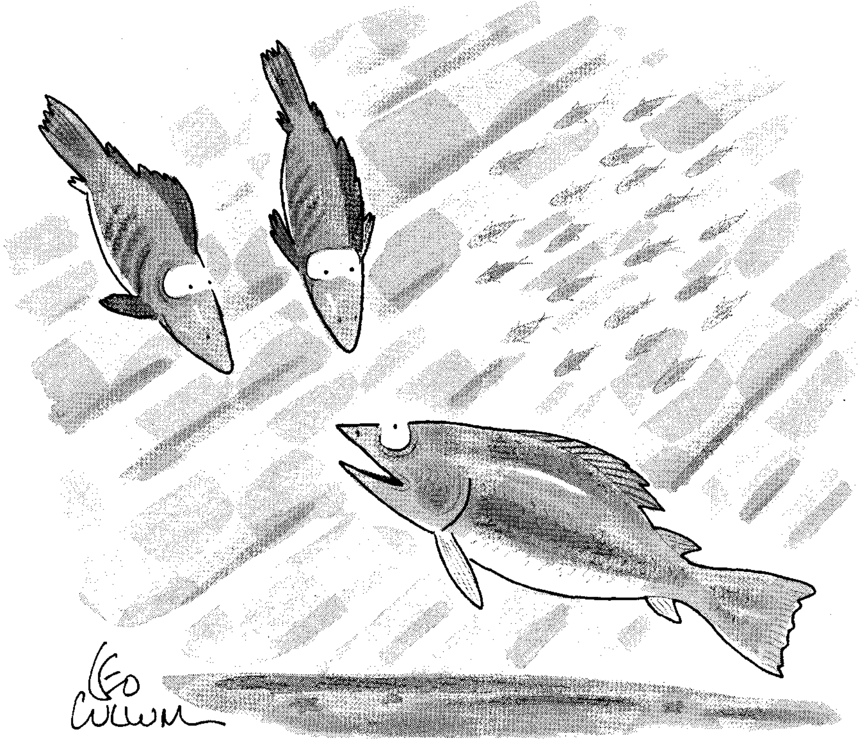
Kennedy and Kassebaum persuaded four Republicans to join all forty-seven Democrats to defeat the medical-savings-accounts measure. The defections were a slap at the Republican nominee. Afterward, Kassebaum invited Dole to a press conference in the Capitol organized by Kennedy. One of Dole's other amendments to the bill, a noncontroversial provision allowing self-employed people to deduct most of the cost of their health-insurance premiums from their income tax, had passed, and he agreed to attend. But when Dole walked in with Kassebaum and Kennedy, Vice-President Gore, who had come to the Senate in case his vote was needed to break a tie, was making a speech attacking the medical savings accounts Dole had proposed. "It was unprecedented," Scott Reed said of Kassebaum's role. "It was the ultimate act of betrayal." Even Kennedy was embarrassed, and suggested to Dole that he say a few words after Gore. Dole turned to Kennedy and asked, "What should I say?" Kennedy, still apparently uncomfortable about the incident, told me he thought Dole was joking, because "we've all been in those situations, one time or another." A few days later, the Senate approved the health-insurance bill without a dissenting vote.

Kennedy's assault on the minimum wage, in particular, was doing serious damage to Dole's campaign, and was also uniting the once splintered Democrats. "It was the perfect vehicle for portraying Republicans as mean, white, and male," Reed told me. The more Kennedy frustrated Dole, the more the media covered it. "They just smoked us on minimum wage to the point where we just caved," Reed went on.

Within a week of Kennedy's stepped-up attack on Dole, Reed said, Dole told him for the first time that he was seriously thinking about resigning from the Senate. "It was so apparent that it was going to be difficult to run for President and run the Senate at the same time," Reed told me. And on May 15th Dole announced that he planned to leave. I asked Reed what role Kennedy had played in Dole's resignation. Kennedy, he said, was the prime legislative mover. "No one could have done it at the same level as Kennedy," Reed said.

Kennedy was disappointed by Dole's decision to leave. "I felt sort of sad, you know. I had a lot of respect for Dole," Kennedy told me, and he added that he did not feel he had forced Dole out.

"Mr. Hazlett is in conference right now. Would you care to see his evil twin?"



"I'm not sure what I am, but I believe I'm a product of Norway."

Dole's departure was a strategic blow as well. Kennedy was moving on to other areas: expanding pensions, tax credit for college education, and what he called Family and Medical Leave II. Those issues would have been likely to make the front page, too, if Dole had remained. About Kennedy's Senate maneuvers, Clinton said to me, "A lot of people have great skills in Congress and aren't great politicians in an electoral sense. Then there are a lot of people who are great politicians who don't understand the moves, you know. He's as good at what he does as Michael Jordan is at playing basketball. I mean, he can always see the opening. He's got lateral vision and it's uncanny what he can do."

THE new majority leader, Trent Lott, let it be known almost immediately that he would allow the minimum wage to come to a vote, and after a few more skirmishes, it passed the Senate on July 9th. The House version of Kennedy-Kassebaum, though, included the medical savings accounts. House Republicans wanted unrestricted access to the accounts, and Kennedy did not want them at all.

Clinton did not like them, either, but he did not want health-care reform to die once again. The President recalled telling Kennedy, " 'We need to have more experimentation in the government. But it needs to be contained to an experiment.' I said, 'If we can do this in good conscience, that's what we ought to do.' " He wanted Kennedy, who was the lead negotiator, to try to make a deal; he did not want to veto the bill, even though he'd publicly taken the position that he would. Kennedy agreed to try medical savings accounts—if the scale was small and the experiment could be halted—and that was much the form the final bill took after considerable haggling with House and Senate Republicans.

One week before the Democratic Convention, with Kennedy sitting conspicuously up front with the President, Clinton signed into law both the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill and the minimum-wage increase. "The worst week of the campaign," Scott Reed told me. In one widely publicized poll, Clinton's lead over Dole increased five points.

Clinton signed another bill that week: welfare reform. Kennedy did not attend that ceremony. The measure ended the federal guarantee of aid to families with dependent children. Kennedy had voted against the welfare-reform bill, after attacking it on the Senate floor as cruel and extreme. If ever there was a law that repudiated all that Kennedy stood for, this was it, but Kennedy reserved his venom for the Republicans. He told me that he had not called Clinton to argue against his signing. "He's been a governor and he knows this issue and he knows what's at stake and he knows where I'm coming from," Kennedy said, and he added that he believed the welfare legislation had little or no effect on the election, a view borne out by many post-election surveys.

Clinton told me he had learned several important lessons by watching Kennedy. Among them was this: "He has what he has because people know that he shoots straight with them. They trust him to do that, and they know that he believes in what he's doing, and he believes in the way he's doing it. And I think that, to me, is the secret of his survival." What Kennedy did in 1996, Stephanopoulos said, was "protect Clinton's left flank."

IN Kennedy's private bathroom in his Senate office hangs a small watercolor painted by the artist Jamie Wyeth. It is a painting of the White House. All the windows are dark except one, on the second floor in the residence. "For Ted. How I wish that it were your light," the artist's inscription reads. In one of our last interviews, I asked Kennedy whether he ever thought about making another run for the Presidency. He laughed. "I love the Senate and think of myself as a Senate person, and that's where my ambition lies," he replied. He was in Hyannis Port, and we were talking by phone. "If one's reach does not exceed one's grasp then what is heaven for?" he asked, more or less quoting Robert Browning.

When I talked to Clinton, I asked if he had ever seen the painting or talked to Kennedy about what it would have been like if Kennedy had been elected President. Clinton answered no to both questions. But, before hanging up, Clinton said he had talked with Kennedy about the circumstances when the photograph "The Loneliest Job in the World" had been taken. "He told me that his brother was not worrying about the fate of the world—he was reading a column by Arthur Krock and he was hacked off by it. And that's really what was going on." Clinton began to laugh. "I said I couldn't imagine what he was talking about." ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

COLLAPSING DOMINANT

Is it possible that Americans are interested in only two things?

BY GEORGE W. S. TROW

MY FAMILY TRADITION

"WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF NO-CONTEXT," an essay published in this magazine sixteen and a half years ago, ends with the following paragraphs:

> When I was very young—four years old, that is, and five—it was my habit in the late afternoon to stand at a window at the east end of the living room of my family's house, in Cos Cob, Connecticut, and wait for my father to come into my view. My father commuted on the New Haven Railroad in those days, and walked home from the station. When I spotted him, I waved. I usually saw him before he saw me, because my eyesight was much better than his. When he saw me, he waved back and walked (I believe) at a faster pace until he was at our door. Once inside, he put down the bundle of newspapers he carried under his arm (my father, a newspaperman, brought home all three evening newspapers and, often, one or two of the morning papers as well), and hugged my mother. Then he took his fedora hat off his head and put it on mine.
>
> It was assumed that I would have a fedora hat of my own by the time I was twelve years old. My father had had his first fedora hat at the age of nine, but he said he recognized that the circumstances of his bringing up had been different from the circumstances of mine (it was his opinion that his mother, my grandmother, had been excessively strict in the matter of dress), and he would not insist on anything inappropriate or embarrassing. He said that probably it would not be necessary for me to wear kid gloves during the day, ever. But certainly, he said, at the end of boyhood, when as a young man I would go on the New Haven Railroad to New York City, it would be necessary for me to wear a fedora hat. I have, in fact, worn a fedora hat, but ironically. Irony has seeped into the felt of any fedora hat I have ever owned—not out of any wish of mine but out of necessity. A fedora hat worn by me without the necessary protective irony would eat through my head and kill me. I was born into the upper middle class in 1943, and one of the strange turns my life has taken is this: I was taught by my parents to believe that the traditional manners of the high bourgeoisie, properly acquired, would give me a certain dignity, which would protect me from embarrassment. It has turned out that I am able to do almost anything but act according to those modes—this because I deeply believe that those modes are suffused with an embarrassment so powerful that it can kill. It turns out that while I am at home in many strange places, I am not free even to visit the territory I was expected to inhabit effortlessly. To wear a fedora, I must first torture it out of shape so that it can be cleaned of the embarrassment in it.

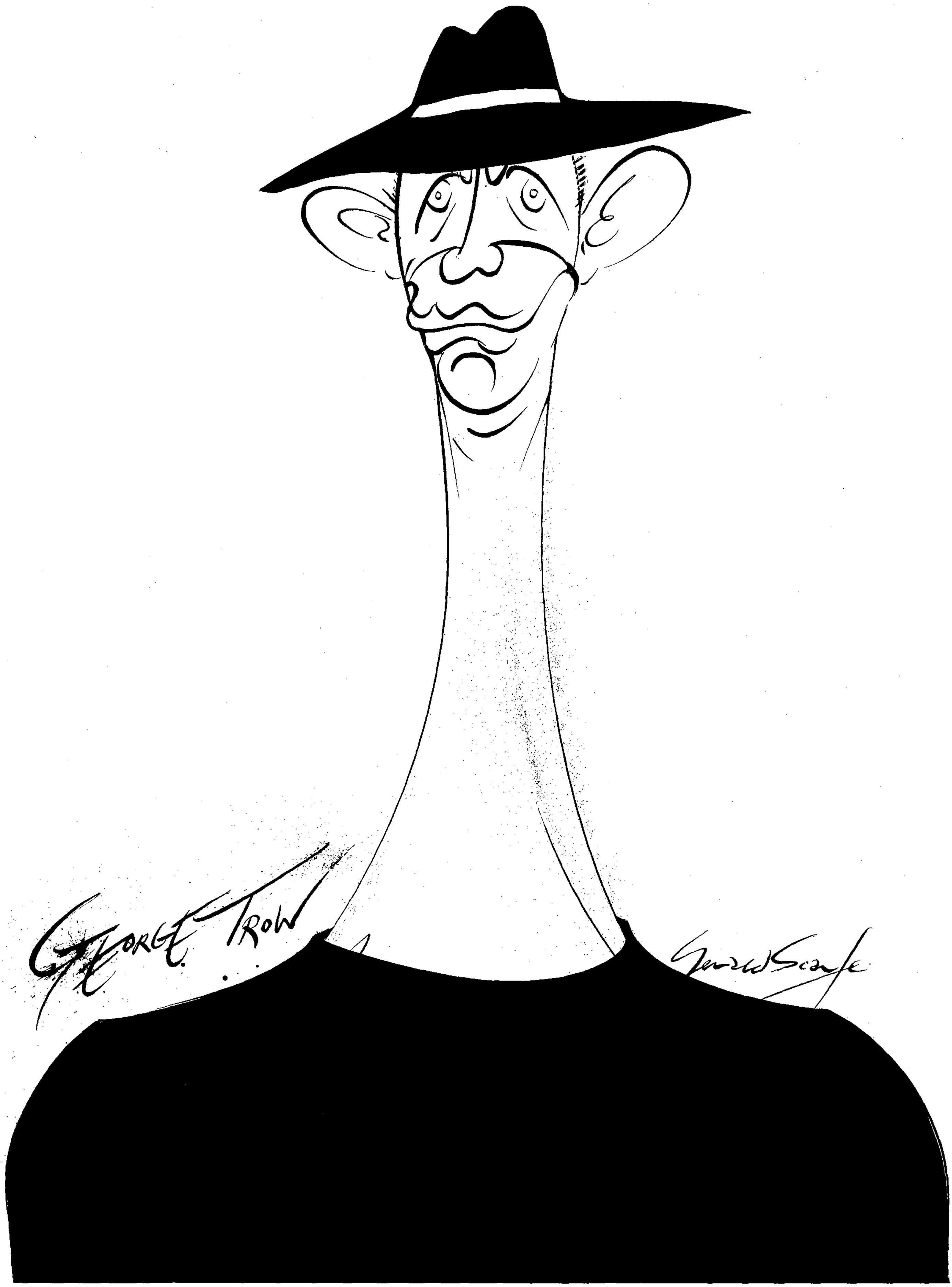
In reading those paragraphs now, I am struck by my insistence on embarrassment. I was misleading myself, or hiding something from myself. The perceptions of the young man I was then are suffused, I think, not with embarrassment but with a feeling of entitlement on the one hand and feverishness on the other.

I want to explain these two feelings—or qualities—now. First, the entitlement. The implication in the paragraphs I have just quoted is that I come from the upper middle class the way many other people come from the upper middle class. In fact, the circumstances are quite specific, and relevant to the essay. I come from a printing family, a media family, even a demographic or high-tech family, which in its social manners preserved the traditions of the upper middle class. Since I had no direct contact with the man himself, I will quote a short description of the founder of the Trow clan in New York, published in 1937 in a book about the history of American printing:

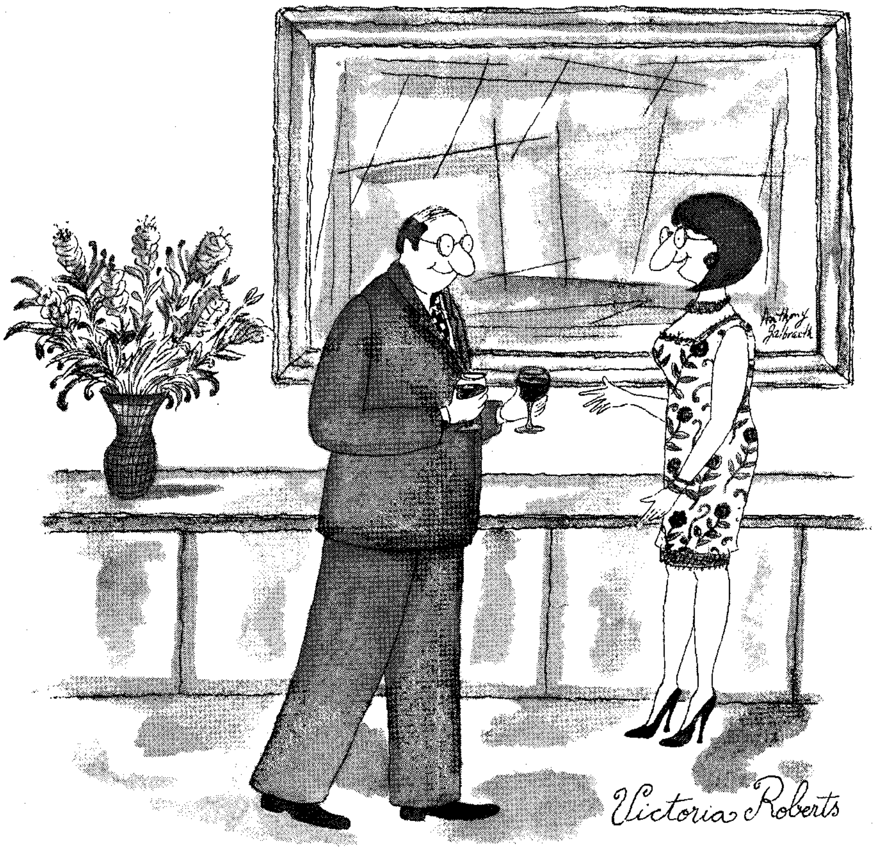
> John Fowler Trow was once described as "the most considerable printer New York has ever had, taking into view the magnitude of his office and the length of time it has continued." Trow was born in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1809 and served his apprenticeship with Flagg and Gould, a firm with a reputation for printing in oriental languages. Trow... went to New York, where, on May 1, 1833, he began business with John T. West under the firm name of West & Trow. They separated in 1836 and Trow continued alone until 1840, when he established the printing firm of John F. Trow & Co., with Jonathan Leavitt, who also had come from Andover, Massachusetts.... Leavitt and Trow formed a separate company under their combined names to do publishing and bookselling.
>
> Trow was always prompt to adopt new methods. He was among the first to use power presses, the power being a mule.... In 1855 he introduced the Mitchell typesetting machine and continued to use it for many years. He imported type fonts in many languages and specialized in the printing of books in foreign tongues. Soon after the Civil War, when William M. Tweed was in control of New York City's affairs, Trow was one of those who stood in the path of the infamous "boss" and was, like others similarly situated, summarily removed. He was forced to sell his printing business to the New York Printing Company, which was owned by Tweed. After the downfall of the political ring headed by Tweed and his conviction and imprisonment, Trow recovered his printing business. It was incorporated as the Trow Printing and Bookbinding Company. John F. Trow died in August, 1886. The Trow business continued until April 29, 1918, when it went into the hands of a receiver.

I first encountered the world of printing in 1952, in New York City, in the city room of the *Post,* where my father worked. Children are the beneficiaries—and also the victims—of the theatre of various moments, and I believe that both my feeling of entitlement and my feeling of feverishness have their roots in my visit to the city room of the *Post.* I was a vulnerable child, eager to have life make its mark on me; that is, I wanted badly to know which theatre wanted me. As for the city room of the *Post,* I found it unimaginably powerful, unimaginably netherworld in its implications, and I felt that it belonged to me. The composing room, especially, which directly adjoined the city room, appealed to me. It was populated by old men, and the machines were not new; they belonged to the era of Trow. All the modern processes had not yet invaded New York daily-newspaper life. The type was set on Mergenthaler Linotype machines; these machines used molten lead. In the city room, I watched my father take "books" of text (three or four typewritten sheets constituted a "book") and walk them to the composing room. In the composing room, a

GERALD SCARFE


GEORGE TROW
Gerald Scarfe

"A fedora hat worn by me without the necessary protective irony would eat through my head and kill me."



"I'm leaving my ankles to science."

• •

man from a Friendly Hell sat at a dangerous machine and turned my father's text into a metal object. It was a process ancient and modern both. Back in the city room, I could feel a vibration in the floor. My father took me then to see the presses, which in their violent turning set the whole building a-hum. These were rotary printing presses; the rotary printing press had made the modern daily newspaper possible; I knew that my father's guardian, Ernest Trow Carter, had married a Hoe, and that the Hoes had for many years made the best and most famous rotary presses.

A year or so later, my father told me a story. He told it lightheartedly, but I took it seriously. A man had come out of the composing room, having heard that there was a young man named Trow working at the city desk. He said, "Is your name Trow?" And my father said yes. And the old man said, "I worked for the Trows."

Somehow, if you put these two incidents together—my visit to the still old-fashioned city room of the New York *Post* in 1952 and the story of my father's encounter with that old printer—you have the story of my life. On the one hand, being taken very early into adult circumstances precisely so that I should acquire a sense of entitlement and continuity, and, on the other, feeling that my family tradition and the traditions to which it was allied were hanging by a very thin thread.

DON'T LET ME GET GRAND WITH YOU

THERE are just five generations of Trows in the story above, including the old man John Fowler Trow, whose first power press worked with the power of a mule, and me; and I can show you that in every year from 1833 to now there has been a Trow in New York City with an interest in printing or journalism; also, in advertising and in the marketing end of demography; that is, in the business of counting people and addressing their characteristics rather than their character. But don't let me get grand with you. It is not an unbroken family tradition. I realize now that I am a man from a broken tradition who was convinced by the theatre of a moment that his tradition was unbroken and that he was the heir to it. Working as though from an unbroken tradition, I have made sense of my life by developing an ability to analyze mainstream American cultural artifacts, and this I also urge my fellow-citizens to do.

THE FATE OF THE MAINSTREAM

IN preparing these reflections, I have consulted a few people. I took Phyllis Cerf Wagner to lunch at the Palace Hotel. The Palace Hotel, in the old Villard Houses, used to be the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, Random House had its headquarters across the courtyard, in the northern wing, and there I used to visit—and sometimes work with—Phyllis Wagner (then Phyllis Cerf, the wife of Bennett Cerf, the head of the house), high in the eaves of the old mansion.

I wanted to ask Mrs. Wagner something, but I wasn't sure what. I had long known her and her family—her two sons had been close friends of mine at Harvard. What I wanted to ask, I think, was "What was it, exactly, that our group was doing?" But I didn't know how to ask that question, so I talked about George Washington, because I was then thinking about—and writing about—George Washington. "You know, I don't think that most people understand that George Washington invented the American mainstream," I said.

Mrs. Wagner looked up, interested. "You know what you've just said, don't you?" she said. I did. The magic word was—always had been, always would be—"mainstream." My question, unasked, had been answered. What we had been doing was: floating in, and sometimes influencing, the mainstream. Period.

LINDY'S, 1963

MEN and women like Bennett Cerf and Phyllis Cerf—and my father at the *Post*—were people with a sense of American history, and the history of the American mainstream of the nineteen-twenties and thirties and forties, who also participated in the daily work of establishing the commercial reality of the fifties and of the sixties up to 1966, let's say.

I can remember once going with the Cerf family to Lindy's in the early sixties. Lindy's was, if not on its way out, past its prime. But we were still in the fifties, in a way. And a best-selling author, then well known, named John Gunther came up to the table, and what he did I have seen done many times since: he was approaching someone who controlled the construct of the moment in order to sell an idea. It was a Mainstream Moment; so it is a Mainstream Moment now, in 1997, when someone approaches Quentin Tarantino to sell an idea. The process is the same; the moments are very different. In Lindy's in 1963, one could still assume that some Second World War seriousness was at work in the popular market. One does not—cannot—make that assumption now. John Gunther was going to write "Inside Latin America Again," or "Behind the Iron Curtain Now," or something like that. But even then, Lindy's, 1963, we all sensed that it was cracking.

LA DOLCE VITA

THERE were a few of us in my generation who, in the seventies, were socially active, because we were equipped for it, and, because it was our inheritance, had a sense memory of the social construct of the fifties (and, before that, the twenties, thirties, and forties). I mean, the sons of Phyllis and Bennett Cerf; the son and daughter of Russel Crouse ("Life with Father" to "The Sound of Music"); the son of Arlene Francis and Martin Gabel; the son of Moss Hart and Kitty Carlisle Hart: all these people (and they were my friends) geared from birth to go out into the life of New York City in young adulthood, *did* go out into the life of the city in the seventies, and what we saw was—Fellini. Earl Wilson was a gossip columnist for the New York *Post.* "That's Earl, Brother" was his sign-off; his jokes were called "Earl's Pearls"; his night-club chatter was called "The Midnight Earl"; I saw Earl Wilson in the seventies totter from half-empty night club to half-empty night club. To say that he was an object of terror for me was putting it mildly because, knowing the process, I knew he would inevitably come back.

REMEMBER

REMEMBER, in the situation I am describing *the referee always wins.*

COLLAPSING DOMINANT

EACH one of these social generations—from the fifties, from the sixties, from the seventies, from the Reagan era, from now—thinks of its social aesthetic as definitive. In fact, they are all in a process: encouraged toward, and beyond, hubris by demography.

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

EVERYONE knows, or ought to know, that there has happened under us a Tectonic Plate Shift, or over us a Cosmic Ticktock. In any case, the buildings are the same: this one a sweet Victorian cottage, that one an old brick tenement out of Hopper, there, on the hill, yet another new Tara, all columns and Cadillacs. The political parties have the same names; we still have a CBS, an NBC, and a *Times.* But we are not the same nation that had these things before.

And suddenly we want them all so badly. We have magazines to support our love for the Victorian. We want a real network. The New American, once again all optimism and make-it-work, hungers for exactly what drove an earlier generation to distraction, almost to madness. "Sweet Smell of Success," a film made in 1957 by a brilliant director named Alexander Mackendrick, chronicles the unattractive (to me) dominance system of the fifties. Men and women under thirty-five, I happen to know, watch this film with wonder and awe. How can we get a piece of that? they ask themselves.

In April of 1957, my father took me to a gathering at the Yale Club of boys from the New York area who were to attend Exeter, my father's school, in the fall. This happened, and that happened, but what happened in my deepest self, which is aesthetic, was that I met a boy like me. His name was Robert Ferdinand Wagner III, and he was the son of the Mayor of New York City. Three years ago, I attended a memorial service for this friend at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Between the city portrayed in "Sweet Smell of Success," in 1957, and the strange, dispirited memorial service for Bobby Wagner, in 1993, is the New York City of my direct experience.

"Giuliani was expecting Bobby to tell him what to do," a friend told me after the service. My mind went back to 1957. Bobby knew a lot *then.* He was brilliant, and his father, the Mayor, took him completely into his confidence. Presiding over the world portrayed in "Sweet Smell of Success" was Mayor Wagner, and ever at his side, enthralled, listening to every word, giving him a kiss on meeting and at parting, was Bobby. Getting all the good information, and living gently.

The anthropology of our situation—I mean mine and Bobby's—in 1957 was quite complicated. Two phrases in use at the time were "the Military-Industrial Complex" and "Ivy League." That is a good place to start. We don't have those things anymore, and both were concrescences, things formed out of many other things, like the media conglomerates being formed now. My immediate sympathy with Bobby Wagner, I now think, had to do with a sense that we had both been handed, in slightly different ways, the same impossible task: to love the unlovable—to love "Sweet Smell of Success" and send it both back and forward, back into a happier American history and forward into a fairer future. The world of "Sweet Smell of Success" was, of course, just the result of human struggle within the context of something like despair.

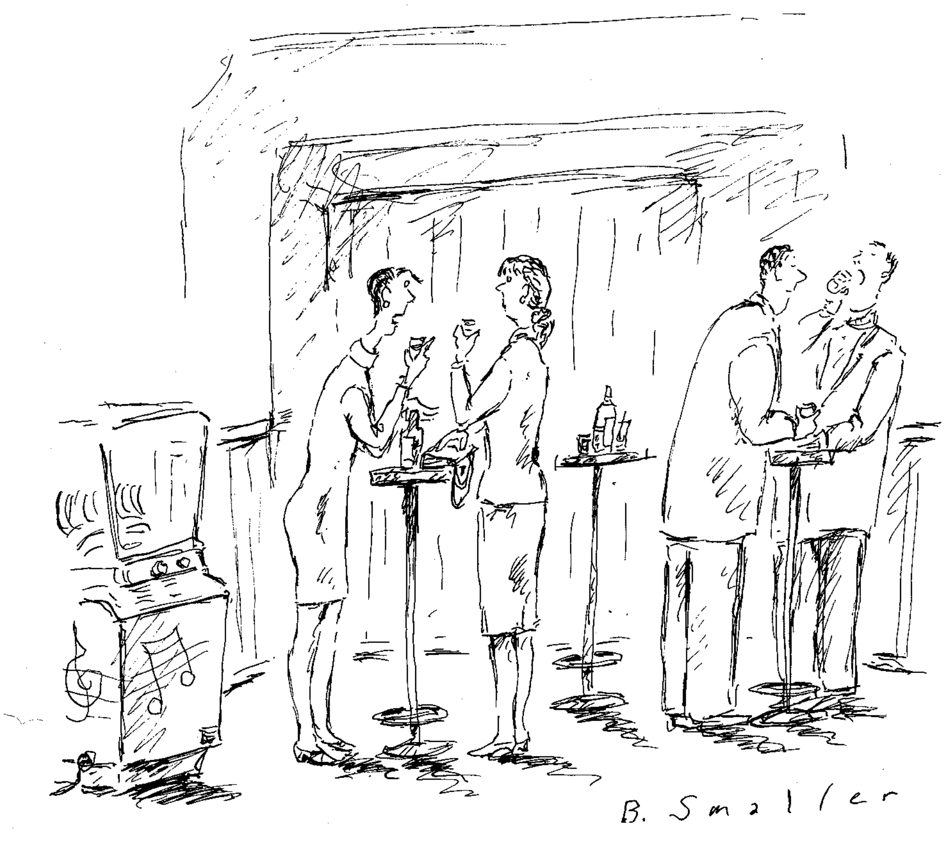
The script for "Sweet Smell of Success," by Clifford Odets and Ernest Lehman, is very good, but it is pale next to the writing of Nathanael West in his account of daily journalism in "Miss Lonelyhearts." Early in "Miss Lonelyhearts," the villainous feature editor, Shrike, and Miss Lonelyhearts ("Are-you-in-trouble?—Do-you-need-advice?—Write-to-Miss-Lonelyhearts-and-she-will-help-you") meet in a speakeasy. "America," Shrike declares, "has her own religions," and, by illustration, he takes out a clipping from his wallet. Its headline reads, "ADDING MACHINE USED IN RITUAL OF WESTERN SECT":

> "*Figures Will be Used for Prayers for Condemned Slayer of Aged Recluse* . . . DENVER, COLO., Feb. 2 (A.P.) Frank H. Rice, Supreme Pontiff of the Liberal Church of America has announced he will carry out his plan for a 'goat and adding machine' ritual for William Moya, condemned slayer, despite objection to his program by a Cardinal of the sect. Rice declared the goat would be used as part of a 'sack cloth and ashes' service shortly before and after Moya's execution, set for the week of June 20. Prayers for the condemned man's soul will be offered on an adding machine. Numbers, he explained, constitute the only universal language. Moya killed Joseph Zemp, an aged recluse, in an argument over a small amount of money."

"Miss Lonelyhearts" was first published in 1933 and reflects the world of journalism of the twenties. West's "goat and adding machine ritual" story was relevant to the world of the twenties, and it is relevant to the world we live in now. We live again within the spirit of the Lindbergh-baby kidnapping, the disappearance of Aimee Semple McPherson, and the Santeria of Wall Street and journalism. It was not *overtly* relevant to the world of "Sweet Smell of Success." New York in 1957 was the New York of Rodgers and Hammerstein, in the country of Eisenhower, the Military-Industrial Complex, and the Ivy League style. We were war winners and we had responsibilities. But I always knew that the goat and the adding machine were running the show; that the goat and the adding machine were embedded in the mind that created the text of daily journalism and would win out. To put it another way, I always knew that the New America had been created forever in the twenties.

"Sweet Smell of Success" was not a very successful movie when it was released, and "Miss Lonelyhearts," despite its air of classic restraint and its literary merit, was viewed with suspicion during the fifties. It was bohemian. It was read by bohemian boys at Exeter. Boys who read "On the Road" had also, perhaps, read "Miss Lonelyhearts" and "The Day of the Locust," by West. There was a red vinyl record, "A Coney Island of the Mind," by Lawrence Ferlinghetti; Ginsberg's "Howl"; and a paperback edition of a compilation entitled "Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre," by the American editor of Nietzsche. These items defined the style of bohemian boys at Exeter in the late fifties. The official style of Exeter in the late fifties had two parts: respect for ancient rituals (shorn of their mystical or religious significance), and belief in the power of modern academic vectors. We bohemian boys knew that this was a system programmed to fail; we were ritual- and truth-hungry. In the phrase "respect for ancient rituals," the accent fell, at Exeter in those days (the last days in which a patriarchy was going to be discussed or planned for), on the word "respect." A lighter accent fell on "ancient," and the word "rituals" was barely whispered. The ritual part was to be supplied, perhaps, by our belief in academic vectors. We bohemian boys had no belief in academic vectors. I know why I had no belief in them; I knew there was a goat-and-adding-machine ritual out there, working a mile a minute, and that it was more powerful than anything in its path. It was working in my own family; it was the ritual of daily journalism.

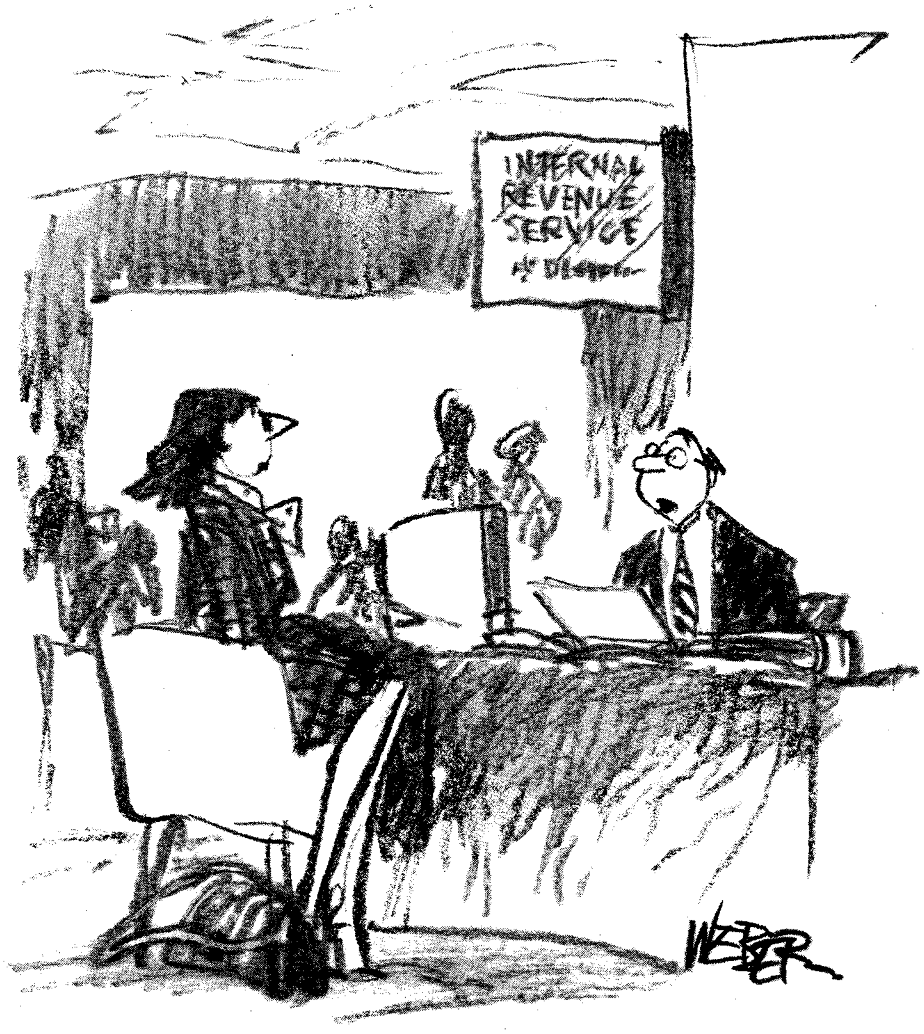
There was a group of boys at Exeter in the middle and late fifties who were called (and called themselves) "negos." They were boys with a "negative attitude." It was a group defined by a mood; it was not a clique. There were negos who were bohemians, but there were also nego athletes, and there were negos at the top of the honor roll. I was a bohemian, because I had read Ginsberg, Kerouac, and West (and because I took a copy of "Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre" with me wherever I went for almost a year), and I was a nego. I followed the line of the negative attitude through the sixties and seventies. It was one of the threads of continuity I held on to in an era in which continuity was being lost forever. The sixties weren't the twenties again; they were the liberal arts expressed in the negative. The seventies, despite the hedonism, weren't the twenties; they were the negative out to get all the rewards formerly held by the positive. The goat-and-adding-machine ritual is now.



"I'll say this for Richard—he's anatomically correct."

THANK YOU, ROMAN POLANSKI

A CERTAIN cynicism: I am writing this in Alaska. Yesterday, I conversed with a man of the kind most Americans are afraid of now. The man began the conversation defiantly: was I, or was I not, the kind of man who would talk honestly about the corruption in our country? This man would not have understood the phrase "Weimar Republic," but I understood that he was testing me; he knew that things were rotten—did I? We locked eyes. Since I am a stranger here, I let him lead. What was it I was doing in Alaska? he wanted to know. I said that I had come looking for a very quiet place in order to write a film script. That interested him. He watched a lot of movies, he said. Was I aware that movies were all done from a political motive? Had I seen "The Net"? Did I understand that they—the government, someone—were trying to establish mistrust of free speech on the Internet? He described the movie "The Net." Apparently, in that movie someone stalks someone over the Internet. That is what my interlocutor said, anyway. I haven't seen the movie. I paused. I didn't know quite what to say. Then I thought, Maybe this man just doesn't know about ordinary cynicism, so I described the process by which most films get made. "You see," I said, "most people are just trying to make money; you have to grab the attention of people fast—the audience finally, but first the money man or film executive you are pitching the film to. Film executives aren't all that intelligent, so you make sure that your idea has something identified with the new right up front, but then very quickly you relate that new thing to something the film executive already knows and identifies with complete utter safe success. For instance," I said, "the person who wanted to



"I assure you, Madam, that every penny you pay in taxes goes straight into the government's pocket."

• •

make the movie 'The Net' might simply have said to his boss that he wanted to make 'Fatal Attraction' on the Internet." My interlocutor was interested, and began to trust me.

Leaving this man, I thought about a father and a son, now both dead. The son was my best friend and my partner. His father survived him, and one night, one difficult night, I found myself having dinner alone with him. This man—the father of my friend—was, let us say, a businessman. He had lived in the world of "Miss Lonelyhearts" but wasn't going to let it get him down. He was a brilliant man, but he had had to go to a hardscrabble law school, while people less brilliant got to go to fine and pretty places. He sent his son to fine and pretty places, all the time making sure that his son knew the contempt he felt in his heart (he said it was contempt) for the fine and the pretty. Years before, I had seen this man in his office in Boston. (He was the proprietor of a sporting-goods conglomerate.) Over his shoulder, as I entered his office, I could see the Boston Public Library—that nice building by McKim, Mead & White. I said something about the library, how nice it was to have that view from one's office. Mr. X turned slowly around and looked at the library, as though for the first time. "Oh, is that the public library?" he said. "I didn't know." He said all this with contempt. References to the fine and pretty from the fine and pretty he didn't need was his point of view. I fell into silence, which was what he wanted. He wanted me to shut my mouth, and he knew how to get that.

He was, of course, a little bit mellower with me after his son died. He was, I think, sentimental mostly about himself. He was alone in life now, and so forth. I flattered. I asked about his business career. I was a coldhearted detective. What was this man's story, I wondered. How was it that he had survived his son, the son being so much stronger of mind and heart. I asked if he had had a mentor, anyone to tell him, you know, useful things to carry into life. He laughed. It was the only real laugh I ever heard him let out. He told me about a man from upstate New York who had been a sharp salesman. "He was the sharpest man I ever met," Mr. X said. "We went out to dinner one night, kind of like this"—and here Mr. X gave me something like a sympathetic "You're all right, kid" nod as I sat opposite him at the dinner table at a big, vulgar, expensive restaurant—"and he told me, 'Jerry, the American people are interested in only two things: astrology and their bowels.' I never forgot that."

Nor will I ever forget it. It's the secret of America. For seventy years, America has been constructed and deconstructed from that point of view.

So Americans are, let us call it, self-absorbed, on the one hand, or masturbatory, and the cynical processes that address these "qualities" do tend to eat through civility. In this situation, conversation becomes difficult. There is more under the table, so to speak, than on the table. Mr. X had been, during the years when our Military-Industrial Complex was built, one of two men who "really ran" (Mr. X's phrase) the General Instrument Corp. Then, in the sixties, he bought a small sporting-goods company and "romanced it" (his phrase) into the conglomerate. (Then it went bust—the romance went sour, I guess—but Mr. X had by that time separated his own finances from the romance, so it was hard cheese on someone else, not him.) But all that time he had been operating on the principle that Americans were interested in just two things—astrology and their bowels. He had been to law school, but the law was just a means of regulating a generality that reacted to astrology and bowels; he had sold people fishing rods and Oriental electronics (his conglomerate was one of the first to get into Oriental electronics), but all the time he was thinking about daily evacuation and the stars.

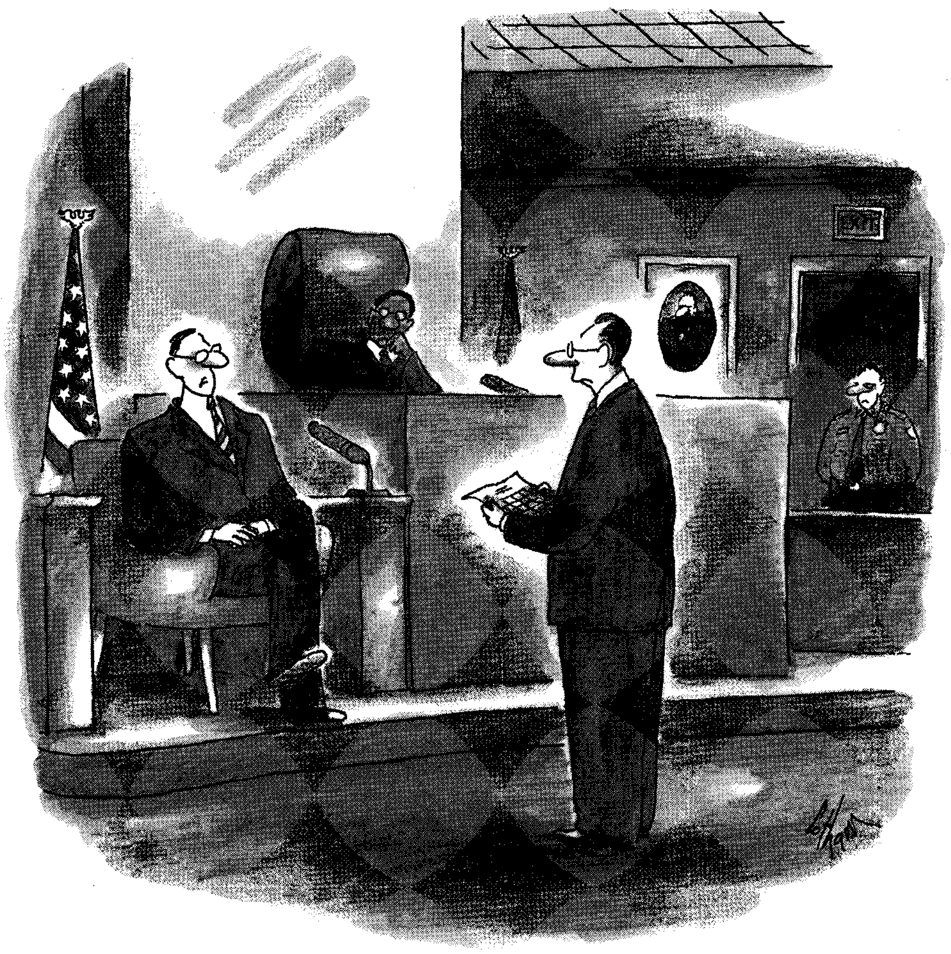
THANK YOU, ROMAN POLANSKI II

MY interlocutor in Alaska has, by my perception, no sense of the sequence of what has been possible in the movie business. For instance, he doesn't know (by my perception) that there wasn't

much in the way of the demonic in mainstream films before "Rosemary's Baby," by Roman Polanski. Mr. Polanski had a sense, I guess, that there was more going on under the table of our fine and pretty American life than there was on the table. I can remember when "Rosemary's Baby" was being released. The marketing people for the movie (just ordinary American businesspeople, now almost certainly in graceful retirement in Hilton Head or Sun City) had the chance, thanks to Roman Polanski, to exercise something like full freedom in relation to their perception that Americans were interested most of all in astrology and their bowels. It must have been a heady moment. Contact with one's animus, in a way. Truth at last, in a way. In any case, they had arranged for the little motto of the film ("Pray for Rosemary's Baby") to be stencilled on the pavement of New York City streets, at crosswalks. You would be walking down Fifth Avenue, say; you would look in the windows at Saks, say; and then you would move down the street. You would stop for a red light. The light turned green; you looked down to be sure of your footing, and there you would see—echo of Thomas Pynchon's end-of-the-world

TWO ON THE AISLE

Although Lord Snowdon is perhaps better known for his portraits of celebrities at leisure or his fine documentary work, he has been paying close attention to the British theatre for more than forty years. His new book, "Snowdon on Stage," contains action portraits, pensive studies, and candid snapshots of the cream of successive London scenes: Olivier, Gielgud, Guinness, Ashcroft, Scofield, Osborne, Finney, Stoppard, the Redgraves, and so many more that it seems like everyone. When Olivier is performing in "The Entertainer," his eyes burn from the demonic face of Archie Rice, but at home he smiles gently at a candlelit supper with his wife, Joan Plowright. None of the pictures, though, glow brighter than this airy 1956 wedding shot of the ingénue Leslie Caron and the young director Peter Hall. Snowdon (still Tony Armstrong-Jones then) was their sole witness, and he came away with a rare vision, onstage or off, of unbridled joy.



"From a purely business viewpoint, taking what doesn't belong to you is usually the cheapest way to go."

• •

book "The Crying of Lot 49"—a secret message to your secret self. "Pray for Rosemary's Baby." I never saw the movie, but I knew it was a hit.

THANK YOU, ROMAN POLANSKI III

PEOPLE need to understand (as they say now) that nothing happens in the serious mass-media business that doesn't appeal immediately to ten million people; ten million people immediately, fifty million in potential. That puts a lot of things out of the running. A new, delicate insight into the novels of Thomas Hardy—hard work to put across. What you need is something that people are in denial about and want to see you take the risk of expressing. I am talking now from the screenwriter's point of view. Imagine yourself in a fatherless family: you don't have a father who patiently takes you through those rites of passage which he knows to be necessary (and which he knows how to navigate). Rather, you have a congeries of crazy aunts and uncles who appear from time to time, shouting at the top of their lungs about something they know you are in denial about; mostly what you are in denial about is your sense of having been abandoned.

THANK YOU, ROMAN POLANSKI IV

ROMAN POLANSKI seems to have had the insight that our thin layer of civility in America was a membrane as thin as the talk at a supermarket, and that everything was going on somewhere else with us. Hitchcock had this insight, too, but he worked it another way. Hitchcock was Aeschylus to Polanski's Sex Pistols as to American horror. I had a friend named Michael O'Donoghue, for several years the head writer at "Saturday Night Live," who was very tolerant of anarchic expression. He was opposed to redeeming social value, or so he said. For cultural avatars beyond *his* pale he had an expression. "I wouldn't touch that with Roman Polanski," he used to say.

ABANDONED

DEMOCRACY opens up the possibility of "abandonment," and creates opportunities for men and women who understand how to play to or on that feeling.

GOODBYE, JOHN MARQUAND

IN 1958, in the era of "Sweet Smell of Success," and six months after I entered Exeter, my family moved to Bedford, New York. In Cos Cob, we had lived in a middle-class house in a middle-class neighborhood. In Bedford, we lived in a middle-class house in an upper-class neighborhood. The change was profound. Here were people who had authority within the Military-Industrial Complex, who kept to older rituals. Their rituals, one almost wants to say, were agricultural. They had their dogs; they had their horses; on the face of it they seemed to have been defined by their dogs and horses. In America (the land of no nuance, the land of the very broad stroke), small changes in social reality can be logarithmic. Four baby steps in a certain direction and you are in Oz instead of Kansas. I am not thinking only of my own history. In 1958, the people I moved next door to not only were universally considered to make up the ruling group of the country; they owned the rituals—the schools, the clubs, the ladders. Part of their style was to say, "But of course we're just ordinary Americans." Five years later, they *were* just ordinary Americans, and their rituals—including the dogs and the horses, maybe—were burdens, and were so perceived by their children.

These people had their own literature. To some extent, their moral dilemmas were of interest to the country at large. A part of the reading and filmgoing public wanted good—or better—information about its secret rulers, just as, at a later date, part of the public would want an honest account of the life and death of John Lennon. My new neighbors had had their stories told—or indicated—by John O'Hara and by John Marquand. "From the Terrace" is the last important book to talk to—or about—the group I am discussing. One wouldn't mention it, except that a huge part of our population seems to be scrambling back to the Terrace—a terrace that has been swept clean, however, of moral dilemmas. "Point of No Return," by John Marquand, seems to me to be the important book in the post-war O'Hara-Marquand œuvre. It tells the story of a man from the milieu I am describing whose values are in conflict. He has taken his liberal-arts education (the one owned by the upper class) seriously; he also is in competition for high office at his bank. Which way will he go? The story is poignant from the point of view of this moment. No one who showed the mildest suggestion of the kind of conflictedness Marquand's hero was feeling could get in the door of his bank now.

When I entered Exeter, in 1957, what I saw was the O'Hara-Marquand world dissolving. "You've got to be kidding" was the point of view of the negos of the school, and the negos were the really bright boys. This atmosphere presented a strange difficulty for me. By my perception, the negos, my group, were in reaction to "Sweet Smell of Success." At the same time, when my father put his arm around my shoulder and took me to the Yale Club in the spring of 1957 he was saying to me, "Now you'll get into the real thing," by which he meant the set of moral concerns Marquand's hero in "Point of No Return" had turned away from, circa 1949. The atmosphere at Exeter between 1957 and 1959 was, I know, strange for many boys there—especially the sons of fathers who had powerfully demonstrated an interest in the liberal-arts mainstream. I am thinking now of the sons of John Hersey, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and John Galbraith, and of my friend Timothy Marquand, John Marquand's son. But I think it was strangest of all for Bobby Wagner—and me. We were under strict instruction to find the fine and pretty within our tradition and stick to it. In very different ways, our fathers had said to us, "What I do to maintain a position within the nonce construct of New York City is just that: what I do. But I am always thinking about Roosevelt. Go and find him for me and bring him home."

COLLAPSING DOMINANT

I AM especially proud of one or two sections of "Within the Context of No-Context," and I think that the central formulation was correct: that it was the role of television to establish the context of no-context, and then chronicle it. And I think that has happened. This period may, however, be at an end.

The O. J. Simpson trial helped. I think that what is coming now is, or will be, a rejection of the seventies as subtext for American social life. I think this rejection will come in several ways, and from several quadrants, all destined to be in conflict. I've spotted two trends—one within the media, and one on what I will call the ground. There is a new cable-television channel called TVLand. And on TVLand one will view, as entertainment, classic commercials. The announcement I saw included a shot of a commercial for Top Brass hair preparation for men, with Barbara Feldon. She looked a little Courrèges in the picture I saw—of another time, suddenly. I put this together with the vogue for Jackie Onassis when young, for Grace Kelly when young, for Audrey Hepburn when young. I think people will reinvent their history using specific images from a more organized moment. On the ground, but operating out of the same motive—a refusal to accept the seventies subtext as a basis for American social life—we have groups like the Freemen. I think the Freemen, in their essential energy, go back to the Whiskey Rebellion. George Washington put down the Whiskey Rebellion in two ways: he gathered an army bigger than the army he wintered in Valley Forge with, and he invoked his own personal authority, a personal authority greater than that possessed by any man then alive. We don't have that man today.

Media culture is confusing in several different ways. Actually, it is confusing in one way I remember quite well—from Exeter. As I say, at Exeter in those days we were ritual- and truth-hungry. Great Events, Great Writers, Great Men and Women, Great Wisdom Systems were all on the table at once, sans ritual. Here you had Socrates, there you had Beethoven, and who could tell the one from the other. They all belonged to a club—the Club of Those Who Had Gone Before. Was the Epicurean life something George Eliot embraced, or was she more of a Hegel girl? And if she had never heard of Hegel what did that mean? And if there were more people on the face of the Earth who understood Nietzsche in 1957 than there had been in 1890, what did that mean in the face of television—or rock and roll? It was all too much for us then in the book department, and now it is all too much for almost everyone in the media department. So

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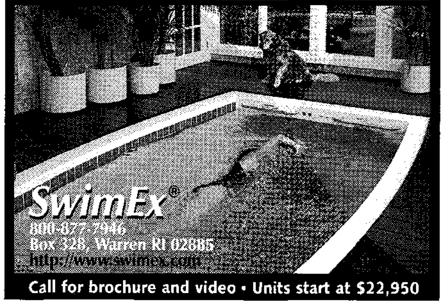

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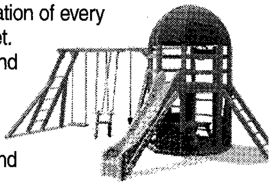

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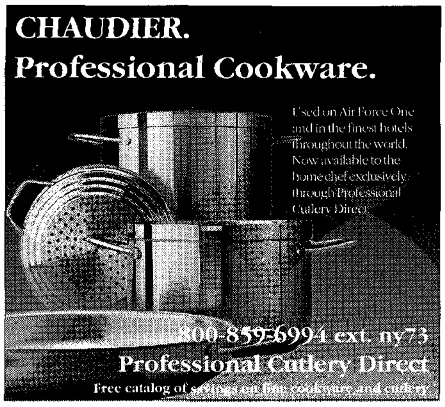

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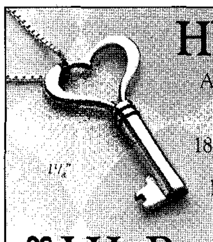

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much for easy ways out. Once again, people are ritual- and truth-hungry. Once again, they have no sense of the sequence in which the cultural objects they are in reference to took shape. I am thinking of my conversation with the pre-revolutionary man in Alaska. I could show him, I know, the movie version of "From the Terrace," the one with Paul Newman, and I bet his reaction to it would be mild: just "Dallas" another way; a tame "Dallas." Then I could play him "The Times They Are a-Changin'," by Bob Dylan, and maybe he already knows it—or could hum it. Then I could sit down with him and watch an episode of "Beverly Hills 90210"—one of the episodes with the boy who looks more than a little like James Dean. I don't believe he would see conspiracy in any of these artifacts. He just doesn't happen to know that he is seeing first an artifact from the Age of Our American Metternich (Dwight Eisenhower presided over an essentially reactionary World Concert, after all), then an artifact from the career of our American—I mean born in America—Tom Paine. And then an artifact from the Age of Seventies Subtext—Anything You Want, Configured Any Way You Want It. He just wouldn't know that he was seeing a war, Dominant Collapsing into Dominant. There weren't many boys who got taken to "Sweet Smell of Success" early enough to understand the seventies from a fifties-control-group point of view. I was one, Bobby Wagner another; a third was Warren Lyons, the son of the gossip columnist Leonard Lyons. I used to run into Warren from time to time during the seventies. Once, at a night club called Reno Sweeney, we watched an entertainer named Genevieve Waite. This was just a few years after the Fillmore East closed. Maybe Warren and I had thought the Fillmore, and all it represented, was going to be definitive for our generation, and here we were, in a night club. Genevieve Waite had just sung a song called "Romance Is on the Rise."

"Romance is coming back, Warren," I said.

"You know what's coming back?" Warren said. "Everything. Then it's going away for good."

THE ROAD TO RITALIN

WARREN LYONS and I, at a night club nearly twenty-five years ago, like the negos at Exeter in 1957, like Quentin Tarantino now, were reacting to *much too much information*—healthy for masculine development. I read in the newspaper not long ago that between ten and twelve per cent of American male children between the ages of six and fourteen are on Ritalin. It calms them down; it clams them up; it makes them controllable; it overcomes some of the *symptoms*, at least, of attention-deficit disorder. It must be annoying—or maddening—to these naturally active, curious, aggressive young males to understand intuitively (as they surely must do—watching "Animal House," say, or "Natural Born Killers," or "Pulp Fiction") that they are being drugged out of the mind-set of the culture they are in natural reaction to.

I have described Exeter as it was in 1957. I was thirteen in 1957. I was on the road to Ritalin then, and so were many of the brightest boys at the school. What was the mind-set of the culture I was in natural reaction to? It was the mind-set of "Sweet Smell of Success," *pretending* that the "Point of No Return" hadn't been crossed. I was already in the "Sweet Smell of Success" (aroma therapy, in a way), but I was being asked to pretend that the moral dilemmas of a Marquand hero were alive and kicking, and they were not.

What of an American male child *born* in 1957? What was the cultural mind-set he met at the age of thirteen—in 1970? Papa's on pot, and Mama's gearing up for Erhard Seminars Training. *No* information about the goat-and-adding-machine ritual (all that's been defeated forever; never mind that both Papa and Mama are deeply *into* the world of pleasure and celebrity), and no memory that the moral dilemmas of a Marquand hero existed *ever*.

And an American male child born in 1970, looking deeply around him in 1983? Social memory has been completely obliterated. Back to the terrace—any way you can get there (I mean John O'Hara's Quogue, South Shore of Long Island terrace)—with a tantalizing sense of a moment (sometime around the moment of his birth), when the old terrace was *destroyed* at the biggest, most drop-dead party ever held in the history of the human race.

And an American male child born in 1983, turning thirteen as I write this? Well, if he's bright, aggressive, curious, and in natural reaction to the cultural facts outlined above, there is a ten-per-cent or a twelve-per-cent chance that he's been drugged. But what are the chances that he is "hyperactive" in some new way, which has never been in any doctor's office? The road to Ritalin is, of course, a *prosperous* road. Your classroom is of a kind that *can* be disrupted; your family life is of a kind where "acting out" is noticed, where a "solution" is called for—and implemented. What of those young, aggressive, hyperactive males who live in perfect harmony with their surroundings, whose hyperactivity is in perfect harmony with some new form of criminal life taking shape now? What *is* the over-all statistic on these new males? Ten per cent? Twelve per cent? Twenty per cent? One in ten? One in five? One in *three*?

SEE YA, DON'T WANT TO BE YA

In 1968, I drove with a black friend to his home town of Docena, Alabama. We drove south in my Barracuda convertible. The songs we listened to on the car radio were "The Fool on the Hill" (my friend sang along; his voice was very good), "Grazing in the Grass" ("What a gas!"); also "Harper Valley P.T.A." and "Ode to Billie Joe" ("Today Billie Joe McAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge").

I found a welcome in Docena. Immediately, I made friends with my friend's youngest brother, Matthew, who was six at the time. I could say that Matthew went with me everywhere I went (certainly we were nearly always together), but in fact I followed him; it was his home town, after all. We had fun, putting it mildly.

Three years ago, I was in the South, and I said to myself, "I must call the Hannahs in Docena." I did. When I drove in (in a rented car this time), Matthew was standing on the porch of his mother's house—six feet four, with a wife and four children of his own. It was fun, putting it mildly. I invited Matthew and his wife to visit me in New York State, and they came. Matthew and I talked about Docena, and I asked him about the drug problem there. "Oh, we got one," Matthew said. "When did it start?" I asked. Matthew, without a moment's hesitation, gave me a specific date—in the middle eighties, as I remember. Like "July 16, 1985." I believe he could have given me the *hour*. That is, at a certain moment, in a certain year, not so very long ago, a certain individual came to this small, unto-itself place outside Birmingham, Alabama, and changed the history of the community. Matthew told me a little of the *mores* and the *lingo* of the drug dealers who have serviced Docena. They have (wonder of wonders!) found their way into the "Sweet Smell of Success" (aroma therapy). In their own mind they are in the vestibule of "21," in New York, about to get closer to the *baddest, meanest* man in America—whoever that mysterious person is, with a telephone sitting next to him, at Table No. 1. "I know; that wonder boy of yours opens next week at the Latin Quarter. Say goodbye, Lester." That marvellous freedom to operate with complete contempt—and command everyone's "respect" at the same time—from *Table No. 1.*

The drug dealers who service Docena have a saying. They say it to their customers after the exchange of drugs for money has been made. It is "See ya, don't want to be ya."

SOMETHING IN COMMON

It may interest the young African-American male to know that he really *has* something in common with his white counterpart. Think of my dead partner's father, the man who "really ran" the General Instrument Corp., who had his own sporting-goods conglomerate, and who had for a son one of the most talented men America has ever produced. *His* philosophy, inherited from some *shrewd old bastard* from upstate New York (someone who really knew what was what; over whose eyes no one ever pulled the wool), was, reduced to its essentials, "See ya, don't want to be ya." There, *there* we have our multicultural *common ground.*

MANY WAYS TO LOOK AT IT

Well, of course, it's not *all* going away for good. But something *has* gone away for good. Let me take you back to Lindy's in 1963, and see if I can show you what was going away for good *then.*

The Second World War changed the demography. For a while, high seriousness was a part (only a part) of the mix. No one likes to think that the vector that has carried him into the demography could get lost *in* the demography, but that is what happens. Rock and roll—or the generating spirit of rock and roll—could get lost there, easily. And just think of all the ideas, and changes, implicit in the hegemony of rock and roll. We could be left with . . . just some of the music.

Then, when the generating ideas get lost, people forget *why* they are singing certain songs and hunger for new generating ideas.

People need to (as one says now) understand the aesthetic of the fifties: not

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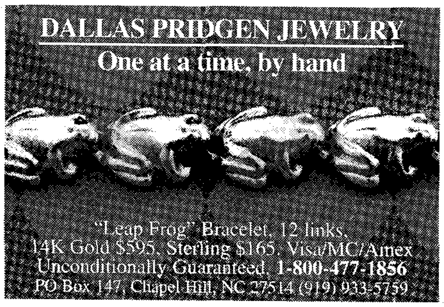

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just the Fonz or the Avedon fashion photographs but the whole landscape. And here a study of the demography as it was then can be a help. There were still active, in 1963, many men and women whose point of view had been formed *before the First World War. That* was what was really going away then: a powerful generation, for whom the landscape was the real landscape and books, was going away for good.

They didn't think of themselves that way, but they were a powerful part of the *mix.* And I am not just talking about Wasps here. There was a sense in which new immigrants from Europe, African-Americans, and old-line Wasps (*anyone,* that is, with fifteen or twenty years of pre-First World War information under his belt) had more in common with *one another* than with their own children. What they had in common was that they *didn't* think of themselves as part of the *mix;* they thought of themselves some other way.

The history of the media (the years 1941-45 somewhat aside) has been our history; the history of our by now hopelessly conflicted collective personality. I have referred in this essay to my partner and his father. My partner's name was Timothy S. Mayer. He died in 1988. His father is dead now, too. Tim died—and he was the *smartest* of men, and among the most talented; he died with no clear view of what had happened to himself culturally, especially within his own family. I remember one Sunday with Tim. As usual, he was *running something down.* It was "Jambalaya," the Hank Williams song. Hank, Tim explained, was riffing off the permanent vogue for *exotica.* He related "Jambalaya" to "Old Cape Cod," the Patti Page song (only Tim could find a link between Hank Williams and Patti Page), and took the whole thing back to "Banks of the Wabash" (a turn-of-the-century, I-love-America, bring-tears-to-your-eyes song), and to "Making Wikki-Wakki Down in Waikiki" (jittery twenties flapper song). Old Hank, Tim more than implied, was trying to get to a *Hawaiian* energy. And somewhere, right this minute, there is a Hawaiian—I mean a real one, descended from a line of Hawaiian kings—wearing a cowboy hat and singing "Lonesome Blues."

This is our Life, and it is supposed to be an attractive one. When people do somewhat serious work (I am thinking of Quentin Tarantino just now), they riff off *that* energy: a demonic gangster standing alone with bloody hands on top of a sacred mountain suddenly breaks into a chorus of "Margaritaville." "Stepped on a pop top," the gangster sings, oblivious both of the blood on his hands and of the beauty around him. But it *is* a demonic gangster now who gets caught in cross-cultural perspective. *No one* is content just to make Wikki-Wakki down on Waikiki.

Tim knew nearly everything, but he didn't know what had happened to *him.* At the very end of his life, he said a very unrealistic thing about his relationship with his father (that he thought his father loved him). He said it to a wise person a little older than him.

"I don't know what you're saying, Tim," the wise person said.

"Right," Tim said, in his very beautiful deep voice. "And *I* don't know what I'm saying."

I have a new television moment to offer up. From the "Sally Jessy Raphael" show. Sally had an all-gossip show recently. Hollywood gossip, New York gossip, gossip about the royals. Then she went into her audience and asked various audience members if they had any questions. Did they want more Hollywood gossip? Did they want more New York gossip? Did they want more about Princess Di and the rugby player? One audience member had seen "Natural Born Killers"; was a little hip; had a sly Quentin Tarantino smile. "Well, Sally," the sly audience member asked, "what's the gossip about *you?*"

And why not give you TV Moment No. 2? Geraldo Rivera (world's most culpable man; I have been drawing back from writing this just to avoid the pain of mentioning his name) is interviewing a panel of teen-age Satanists. As you know, in addition to being the worst person on the face of the Earth Geraldo is just about the *nicest.* A critical word you never get out of Geraldo ("Now, Mr. Teen-Age Satanist, the reason you're feeling that way, Mr. Teen-Age Satanist, is that, Mr. Teen-Age Satanist, your options, Mr. Teen-Age Satanist, your opportunities for spiritual growth"—well, you never get a critical word). But Geraldo isn't in *favor* of teen-age Satanism; he wouldn't want to leave you with *that* impression. So he is asking the teen-age Satanists if, in fact, they don't think they might not be passing through a *phase.* The teen-age Satanists are quite sure that they are happy as they are. Geraldo presses on. Don't they think that *someday*—and he doesn't quite hold out the image of a white picket fence (or a talk show of their own), but his face, his lovely, friendly, prosperous-as-hell face, indicates that all things are possible here in the Land of the Free. This is a little too much for one particularly content teen-age Satanist. He doesn't like the white picket fence in what Geraldo has said. He makes immediate reference to an incident in which Geraldo indicated a kind of sort of interest in the possibilities (are they there?) of the, let us call it, the *occult.* Geraldo piped down. Cut to commercial.

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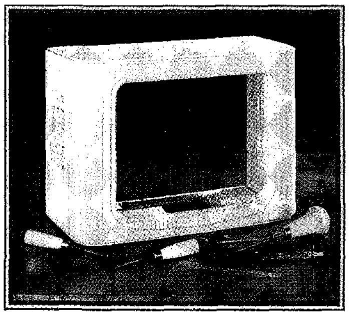

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

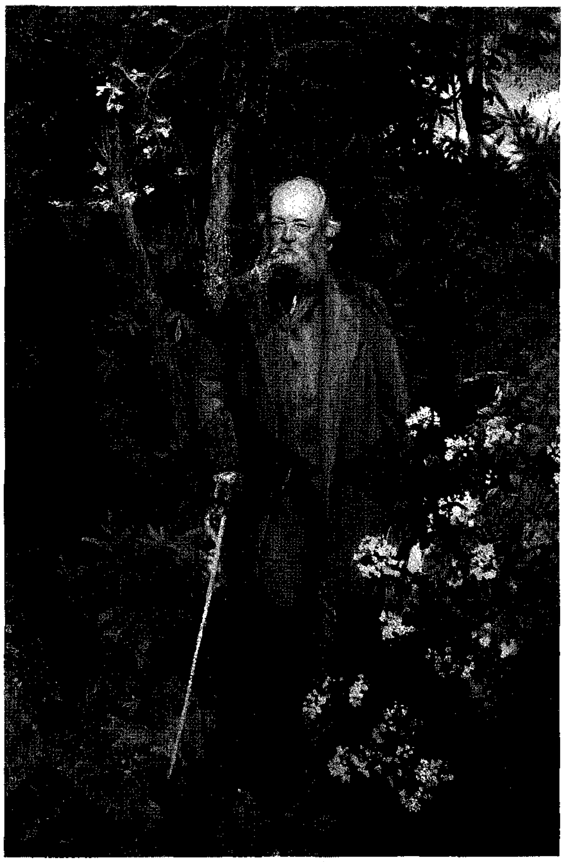
OLMSTED'S TRIP

How did a news reporter come to create Central Park?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

OLMSTED is part of the good fortune of New York, our lucky break. That, of all the designs in the 1858 competition for Central Park, it was his "Greensward" plan that won; that it got built more or less as he and his partner, Calvert Vaux, intended; that the park they planned is still more or less intact: all these things are so firmly contrary to the general run of New York compromises and near-misses that the Park remains our around-the-corner miracle. (Think, by contrast, of what happened at the United Nations complex, or what is happening in the new Times Square.) It works, and always has.

Yet Frederick Law Olmsted the man has receded as a city hero, or, at least, has become a bit disembodied. If he has any reputation left as a thinker, it's as a quaint believer in the moral power of pure landscape: closeness to chlorophyll will do you good. A new exhibition of photographs in praise of Olmsted and his parks, called "Viewing Olmsted," is touring America. It includes photographs of his spaces by Robert Burley, Lee Friedlander, and Geoffrey James. (The show started out at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, in Montreal, and is accompanied by a book of the same title, containing essays by Paolo Costantini and John Szarkowski.) Some of the photographs are lovely, but they all project a picture of Olmsted's landscape architecture as "earth art," touched by an air of melancholy, romantic isolation, and sylvan loneliness. The cities poke their heads up around the parks awkwardly and unwelcomely. There are almost no people in the pictures, perhaps because, as John Szarkowski writes severely, we must not "obscure the basic difference between parks and playgrounds." Olmsted is a transcendentalist who once passed through Babylon. And the choice of the title "Viewing Olmsted" suggests that he is, like a swan, beautiful but mute. You don't read Olmsted or listen to him. You just look.



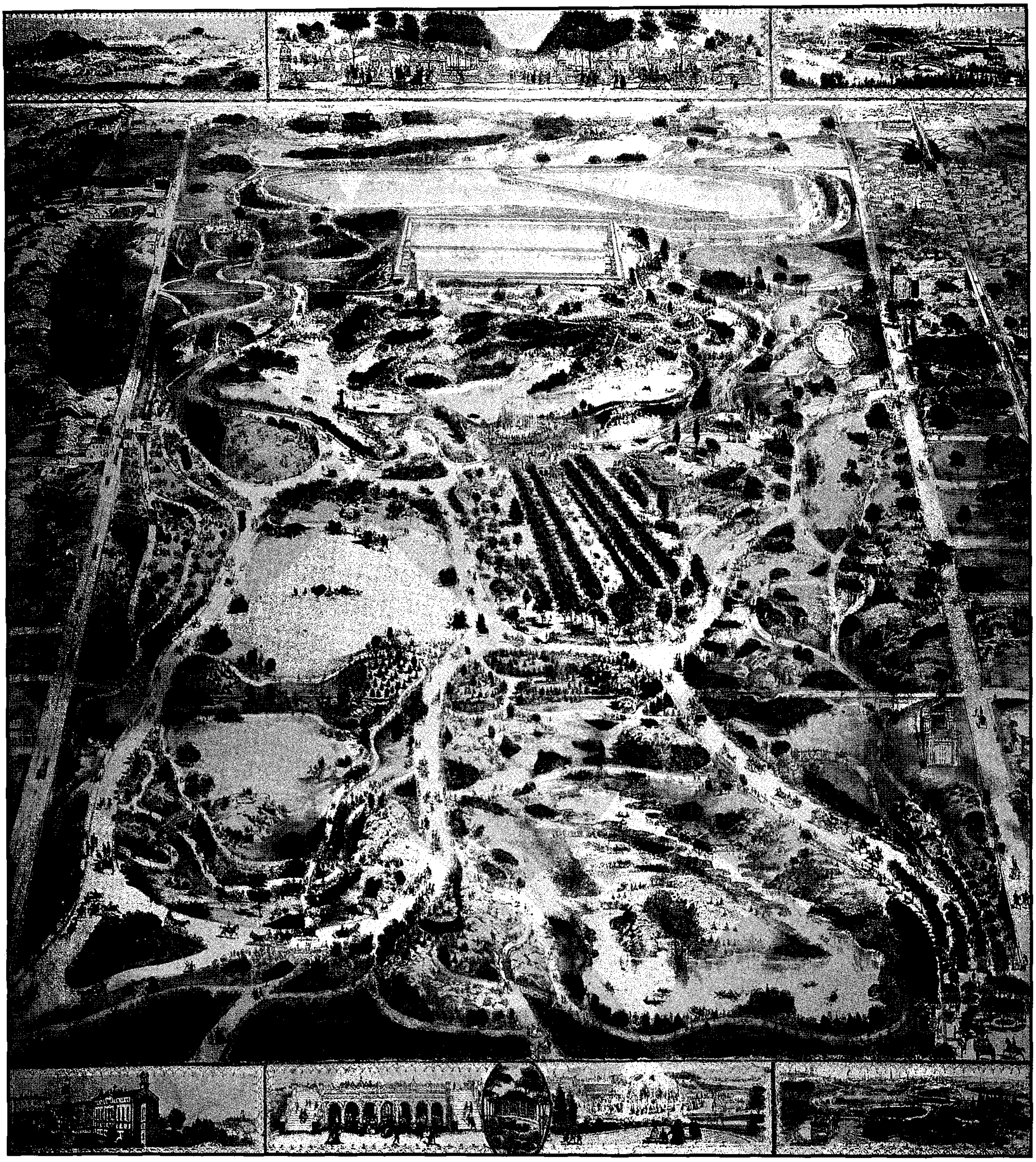
The man nobody really knows and everyone trusts: Frederick Law Olmsted, by John Singer Sargent.

Yet even someone making a first, running encounter with Olmsted discovers rather quickly that the silent, up-in-the-air Olmsted accords oddly with an earlier, ink-stained Olmsted. Before he designed an inch of parkland, he was one of the most famous and articulate men in New York: an inspired and important newspaper reporter, and an influential witness to the reality of slavery and the slave states. (As late as the nineteen-sixties, Malcolm X said that reading Olmsted helped him understand the horrors of slavery.) The *Times* praises him now as our finest creator of public art; but one would never know that he, as much as anyone, invented the *Times.*

The ungreen Olmsted does have an academic following. His great book "The Cotton Kingdom," edited and with an introduction by Arthur Schlesinger *père*, has just been brought back into print by Da Capo, after many years away. But there, too, Olmsted the writer and Olmsted the parkmaker are left unconnected. A small ornamental footbridge does bring together what Olmsted saw and thought as a reporter and what he put into his parks. He developed, in a fragmentary and improvised way, a prescient belief that the basis of democracy lies in what we now call civil society but which he, using a better name, called "commonplace civilization." The pressure that drove him from one career to the other was the pressure of this discovery. When we walk in the Park, what we are seeing is not a protected bit of nature but something more original: a democratic playground, a liberal common, the ideal anti-plantation.

OLMSTED was born in 1822, the son of a comfortable Hartford drygoods merchant. He was meant for Yale, but he ended up attending classes for only one semester, in 1845. Before that, he led what he called a "decently restrained vagabond life." Afterward, he worked as a gentleman farmer first in Connecticut and then on Staten Island. He did a good job: he won a silver spoon for his pears.

In 1850, when he was twenty-eight, he went to England and wrote a book about farming methods there, entitled "Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England." In 1852, the American farmer met Henry Raymond, the editor of the brand-new *Times*, and announced that he wanted to become a foreign correspondent for the paper, and that the foreign country he wanted to cover was the American South. Within five minutes, Raymond had given him the job, and in two months Olmsted was appearing in the paper. The only conditions that Raymond made were that Olmsted write only his "personal observations" and that he not feel "constrained



Central Park: Not a protected bit of nature but something more original—a democratic playground.

by regard to consistency with the general position of the paper."

This moment was to be significant for Olmsted, for the *Times*, and for Northern consciousness before the Civil War. But how did someone of such little experience talk himself so quickly into what was already a plum job? In part, it was a reflection of how tiny the nineteenth-century New York élite was. But it was also typical of Olmsted's peculiar charisma. Olmsted was not the kind of natural who burns so hot that everyone has to get out of his way. He was the kind who burns so bright inside that everyone leans toward him. He was handsome, in a delicate, almost feminine way, and he had the aura of calm self-containment which can have an almost magical effect on people in nervous, uncertain professions like newspapering. He was the kind of man whose self-absorption registers as self-confidence.

Later on, it became plain that he suffered from severe depression. Though he had a wise wife and a good family, periodically throughout his life he was compelled to retreat from his work to nurse his melancholia. At the height of the Central Park project, in 1859, the commissioners voted to send Olmsted off to Europe for a rest. It is difficult to understand how this nervous depressive—whom even Vaux, his admiring partner, once exasperatedly described as a "lugubrious, sallow, bloodless figure"—ever managed to put together such an impressive series of campaigns: writing a huge, definitive book on the South in the time it takes most writers to clear their throats, and organizing and overseeing the construction of the world's greatest park in less time than it takes a contemporary architect to make the scale model with all the little people.

But "campaigns" may be a useful word, for what Olmsted's character resembles more than anything else is that of the other great, depressive Northern campaigners, Grant and Sherman and even Lincoln. In fact, Olmsted idolized Grant, and during the war he came to know him well. He must have thought that Grant's character, in its combination of sensitivity, straightforwardness, and deep, internalized melancholy, was like his own. They shared a capacity to turn neurosis into charisma, and an intuition that self-doubt oscillating with arrogance was the right unheroic manner in which to lead a democratic army. Olmsted's army was made up of Irish and German laborers armed with spades and shovels, but the psychology was the same. If the top man, in the tent, is obviously even unhappier than you are, down in the ditch, you find it hard to resent him too much. Olmsted was like that: the sad man nobody really knows and everyone trusts.

He went South in December, 1852, and spent four months travelling through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. At first, Raymond was unsure about his writing. Like many editors, he thought that he wanted the fresh voice, but then he didn't know quite what to do with it when he got it. "I can't write a different sort of letters," Olmsted once complained. "If Raymond wanted statesmanship and generalizations he is at the wrong shop." Olmsted helped invent the kind of reporting we do now: what in his work takes the place of statesmanship and generalizations, and even good writing, is talk—pages of it. Not many reporters before him had made writing out of what people said, just as they said it.

A widespread prejudice at the time Olmsted went South held that, although the South had slaves, it also had a culture—or, rather, that it had a culture because of the slaves. Slavery made culture possible by creating leisure. Even moderates were inclined to grant that, while the Southern system might be wrong, or, anyway, unsustainable, it had created an "organic" society, with a cultivated upper class, in a way that the North hadn't, and couldn't.

Olmsted saw the opposite, and stated it flatly. Aside from a thin veneer of classical learning, there was, he announced, no original civilization in the South. The Southerner, he said, was cultivated, but this cultivation was shallow:

> The whole South is maintained in a frontier condition by the system which is apologized for on the ground that it favours good breeding. . . . The child born today on the Northern frontier, in most cases, before it is ten years old, will be living in a well organized and tolerably well provided community; schools, churches, libraries, lecture and concert halls, daily mails and printing presses, shops and machines in variety, having arrived within at least a day's journey of it; being always within an influencing distance of it. There are improvements, and communities loosely and gradually cohering in various parts of the South, but so slowly, so feebly, so irregularly, that men's minds and habits are knit firm quite independently of this class of social influences.

The absence of community meant that whatever culture did exist in the South was crudely romantic: "Every wish of the Southerner is imperative; every belief undoubted; every hate, vengeful; every love, fiery. . . . He seems crazy for blood. Intensity of personal pride—pride in anything a man has, or which connects itself with him, is more commonly evident."

Olmsted compared the fixed, limited, feudal, "vertical" society he found in the South with the open, "horizontal" one he had left in the North. In a memorable, Whitmanesque passage he wrote:

> In a Northern community a man who is not greatly occupied with private business is sure to become interested in social enterprises. . . . School, road, cemetery, asylum, and church corporations; bridge, ferry, and water companies; literary, scientific, art, mechanical, agricultural, and benevolent societies; all these things are managed chiefly by the unpaid services of gentlemen during hours which they can spare from their private interests. [Our young men] are members and managers of reading rooms, public libraries, gymnasiums, game clubs, boat clubs, ball clubs, and all sorts of clubs, Bible classes, debating societies, military companies; they are planting road-side trees, or damming streams for skating ponds, or rigging diving-boards, or getting up fireworks displays, or private theatricals; they are always doing something.

Thirty years earlier, Tocqueville had seen similar things, and had been unequivocal about the crucial role of small associations in making democracy work. But the associations he had had in mind were purposeful, moralizing, or educational. "The Americans make associations," he wrote, "to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner they found hospitals, prisons, and schools." Olmsted's almost comically particularized list is made up mainly of "entertainments"—of things people do for fun.

Olmsted returned to this thought again and again. In 1853, he wrote that to create "a democratic condition of society as well as of government" it would be necessary to have more "parks, gardens, music, dancing schools, reunions," the purpose of which was "unconscious, or indirect recreation." The recreation could be more important than the message. In the eighteen-sixties, helping to found a small magazine, *The Nation*, he wrote that in America "a newspaper may well be the only substitute for whatever, in a society more elaborately civilized, keeps a man's commonplace civilization alive."

Around the same time, he began to work on a book on "the drift of human nature in America in the last fifty years," and in preparation he read Tocqueville, Defoe, Bacon, Spencer, Balzac. The book, which he never completed, survives only in fragments. At one point, he writes, "The foundation of civilized society is not a community . . . which is bound by arbitrary lines." At another, he attempts a kind of allegorical description of frontier types. Where is the American, he wonders, on whom you can build a future? He denigrates a backwoods romantic he calls the Fruit of Civilization, who reads French novels and hums Handel but curses blacks for riding on public buses. Then he looks at two workmen, one German and one Chinese, and concludes

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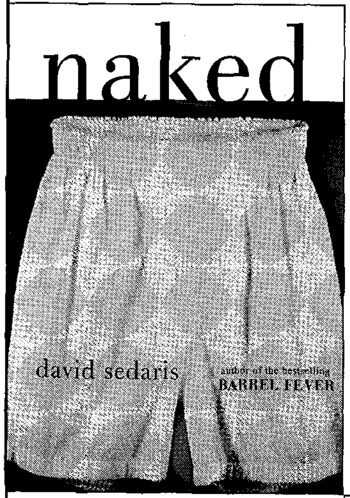
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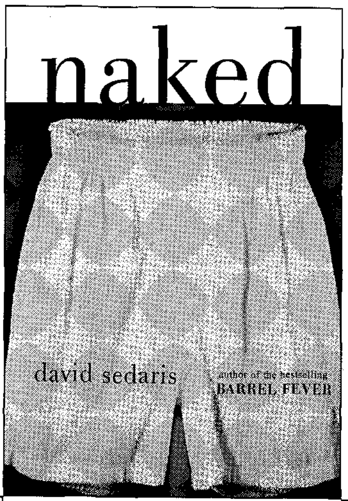
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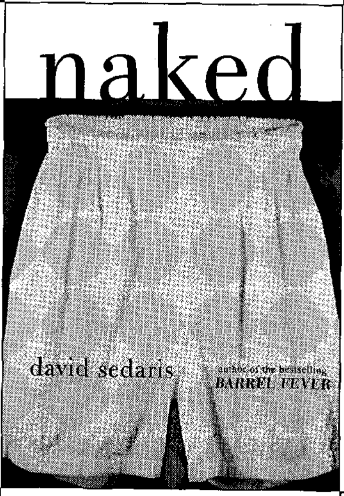
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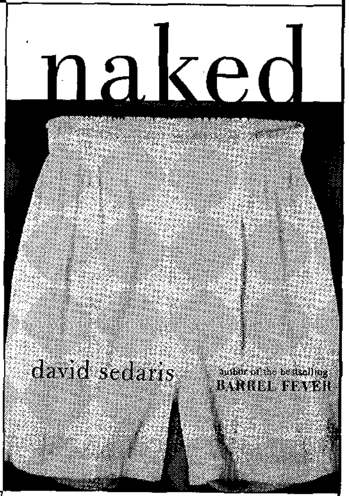
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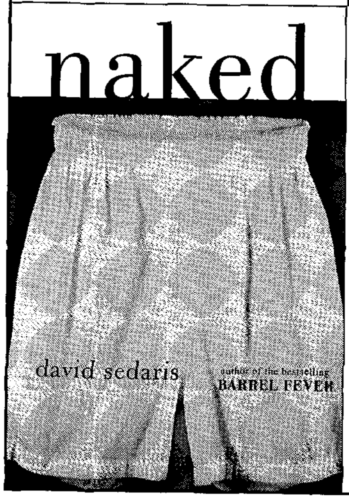
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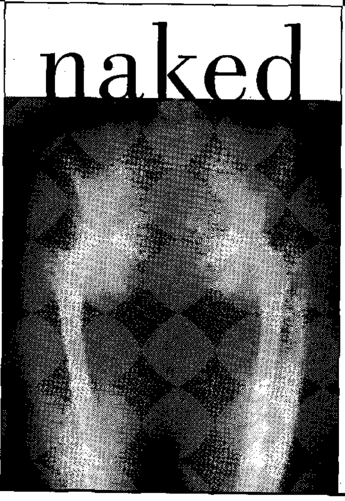

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that what matters for a democratic citizen is "not industry, nor well-balanced supply and demand, nor sobriety and inoffensiveness only. . . . The highest point on my scale can only be met by the man who possesses a combination of qualities. . . . Shall we call it communicativeness?" The mark of a liberal democracy is the presence of organized gregariousness, the principle of communicativeness, of commonplace civilization.

OLMSTED was right. Commonplace civilization is the beating heart of open societies. In a famous 1993 study of democratic institutions in Italy, Robert Putnam gave a quantifiable, empirical confirmation of Olmsted's insight: what makes democracy work is the presence of what, in sociologese, is called "horizontal" leisure groups. Choral groups make good government; fireworks protect from tyranny.

Yet Olmsted was a lot less moist about community than many modern communitarians (including, at times, Putnam himself). He was hardheaded about the limits of communicativeness. He never dreamed of recovering a lost organic community, outside the hold of "procedural" liberalism. In "The Cotton Kingdom" he announces that if you want to see an organic, unself-conscious culture you can look south—to a community where everyone knows his place and, lacking any other experience of community, takes its abuses as part of the natural order. Olmsted understood that there was no possibility of restoring a lost community of authentic relationships. All those pleasure-seeking little groups would have to be forced together artificially.

A liberal civilization would have to accept a great deal of organized hypocrisy. "A man comes to our house, and custom requires that our countenance should brighten, and that we should say we are glad to see him," he wrote in "The Cotton Kingdom." "We have to choose between a forced, artificial, formal and false expression of a true kindness, and truth and simplicity. . . . The Southerner can understand nothing of all this. He naturally accepts the institutions, manners and customs in which he is educated as necessities imposed upon him by Providence." Olmsted saw that glee clubs could be the foundation of a truly democratic society, but only if people accepted the notion that there would be other glee clubs, making other music, which they might have to pretend to like, even if they didn't. For Olmsted, fireworks and hypocrisy were the foundations of liberal government: on the one hand, a commonplace civilization of people playing their own games; on the other, an organized pretense that one group's games were just as good as the next group's.

Unlike most modern communitarians, Olmsted believed that only government could do both jobs at once: let the fireworks go off and enforce the hypocrisy of believing that they all sparkled the same. In 1865, he wrote, "It is the main duty of government, if it is not the sole duty of government, to provide means of protection for all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness against the obstacles, otherwise insurmountable, which the selfishness of individuals or combinations of individuals is liable to interpose to that

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pursuit." The crucial and, in some ways, bewildering about-face in Olmsted's life isn't an about-face at all. Building a better park was a way of helping to shelter commonplace civilization. A liberal society couldn't tell people what games to play, but it could build a park where they could play them.

OLMSTED'S transition from scribe to landscape architect was improvised. He got himself hired as the New York City park superintendent before anybody had any idea what the Park itself might look like. (He was given the job because he was seen as being above or outside politics.) Calvert Vaux approached him about collaborating on a plan for the Park. Vaux was a trained architect, and he taught Olmsted how to draw plans. They worked together, nights and weekends, for several months in 1858. The plan they submitted was easily the most original in the competition, and won hands down.

Even today, the plan of the Park seems disordered. It looks like a cutaway view of an animal whose organs have been packed in haphazardly. The Mall is oriented toward nothing much and goes nowhere in particular. The lakes and ponds are all nestled in their own places, and are not part of a continuous waterway. The main areas are not neatly marked off but dribble away into one another. There is a deliberate absence of orientation, of clear planning, of a familiar, reassuring lucidity.

Central Park is without a central place. It has many centers, and was meant to: the Sheep Meadow, the Mall, the Reservoir—all provide an experience of the center without actually being one. This aspect of the Park troubled people. Some of the wealthy New Yorkers who were involved in the project hated it; the slack structure drove them crazy. In the years from 1858 to 1861, as the Park was being built, most of Olmsted's energy was spent in resisting the steady, sometimes overwhelming pressure to make the Park look like a park: to give it a shape, a layout, a fixed form. August Belmont, one of the richest and most powerful men in New York, seconded a plan, created by another rich man, Robert Dillon, to have a grand "Cathedral avenue," a single central allée of trees, run, Versailles style, from end to end of the Park. Olmsted's objection was not merely that such an allée would break the illusion of a forest in the middle of the city but that it would give a false, forced, European-style unity to what was meant to be a non-centered, American design. Unifying elements were exactly what wasn't wanted. He wrote, "A simple and unartificial treatment with variety and some degree of intricacy, seems to be preferable in a City-Park to straight lines of trees or stately architecture. These belong not to parks for the people, but to palatial gardens." The Park remained "communicative," not ceremonial.

The Park as Olmsted and Vaux imagined it was an almost entirely fantastic place, a kind of Ruskinian Disneyland. They decided to build, on approximately seven hundred and seventy acres of smelly swamp and rocky outcroppings and weedy trees, an orchestrated fantasy of nature—meadows and rock bluffs, ponds and wooded hillsides, memories of London Fields co-existing with intimations of the Palisades. Even the materials for the Park's bridges were "inauthentic"—Nova Scotia stone and Philadelphia brick. The Park was made, not found.

OLMSTED'S greatest accomplishment was to make a park that is a playground, but where the play doesn't interfere with the parkness and the park doesn't interfere with the play. The Park's 1863 Annual Report dismissed the notion that it ought to be given over to a single, fixed kind of "American" pleasure:

> The Park is an enclosed ground devoted to such popular amusements as can . . . be enjoyed in the open air. This area is situated in the centre of the city, having a population not altogether homogenous, reared in different climes, and bringing to the society of the metropolis views of labor and ideas of social enjoyment differing as widely as the temperature of the various countries of their origin. A day's work in the large cities of Europe, and a day's work in New York, are not the same; the amusements and routine of the daily life of the Sicilian and the Scotchman are dissimilar. Each brings with him the traditions and the habits of his own country. The work of fusing the people of differing nationalities into a homogenous body can be accomplished only during the life of two or three generations, and it would be difficult to prescribe rules that would satisfy these dissimilar tastes and habits. The most that can be attained at the Park, is to afford an opportunity for those recreations or entertainments that are generally acceptable.

The nature of the achievement strikes home much more sharply if you live in

BRIEFLY NOTED

BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO, by Mary Gaitskill (Simon & Schuster; $22). Like Gaitskill's first, titillating collection, these stories—although about various characters and told from various perspectives—seem to illuminate moments in the life of a single persona: a woman who infuriates her father by announcing her lesbianism as a teen-ager, leaves home to work in strip joints and beg, becomes an accomplished but unhappy writer (or social worker), and has extraordinary but unfulfilling liaisons with both sexes. These accounts, teeming with disturbed yet all too recognizable people, go beyond mere subjectivity in the minuteness with which they record emotional nuance.

AS SHE CLIMBED ACROSS THE TABLE, by Jonathan Lethem (Doubleday; $22.95). Philip is an anthropologist who studies college course catalogues and food-service menus; Alice is a particle physicist. Between them, interdisciplinary sparks fly—until, that is, a colleague invents a black hole, informally christened Lack, whose negative presence becomes Alice's obsession. In this bravura sendup of academic foibles, no one escapes unscathed, and yet Lethem still succeeds in pinning the reader's affections on his beleaguered lovers.

GUNS, GERMS, AND STEEL, by Jared Diamond (Norton; $27.50). This book poses a simple but profound question about the distribution of wealth and power in the modern world: "Why weren't Native Americans, Africans, and Aboriginal Australians the ones who decimated, subjugated, or exterminated Europeans and Asians?" Diamond carefully redirects this morally fraught question, so often answered in racist terms. To explore the discrepancies in technological and cultural development he looks not at peoples but at places, and at the natural resources available to different indigenous populations since 11,000 B.C. The scope and the explanatory power of this book are astounding.

THE COURTSHIP OF OLIVIA LANGDON AND MARK TWAIN, by Susan K. Harris (Cambridge; $17.95). Olivia Langdon, the scion of a prosperous Elmira family, met Samuel Clemens in 1867, when she was twenty-two; they were married three years later. Generations of scholars have depicted her as a prudish keeper of the proprieties—a cultural wet blanket. You might have wondered what they ever saw in each other. Harris, nimbly interweaving texts (letters, diaries) and contexts, dispels the mystery, bringing back the real Mrs. Twain: a woman of genuine intellectual reach, and a passionate reader in an era where that passion could itself be a kind of art.

NAKED, by David Sedaris (Little, Brown; $21.95). Here the author turns his gift for situational absurdity (nudist sports, paraplegic shoplifting) on his own life, and the result is a tug-of-war between short-sketch hilarity and the more complicated ambitions of a memoir. Its richest character is his mother, who treats everything from her lung cancer to a whore who shows up at Christmas with the same seen-it-all acerbity.

exile from Central Park. In Paris, for instance, in the Luxembourg Gardens and the Bois de Boulogne, the play spaces are either segregated, as in the leftover royal gardens of the Luxembourg, or largely nonexistent, as in the Bois. All the activities that go on seamlessly and, on the whole, unobtrusively in Central Park—roller-skating, merry-go-round riding, ice-skating, rowing, theatregoing, puppet-show watching, street entertaining—are set apart in the Bois in a separate pleasure garden. There the park is the park, and the playground is the playground. Central Park, on the other hand, remains a place where the limits of tolerance and coexistence between park and playground are tested and retested in each generation, sometimes tragically but most often successfully. (Every time the kid with the boom box walks through the Park from north to south, he is probing the places where one commonplace civilization ends and another begins. That's his aim.)

Olmsted had a lot of the prejudices of his time and class. He got mad when people came into the Park and trampled the shrubbery. But even his critics admit that he believed in building cultural "capital" for everyone. His Park always absorbed people. Almost as soon as it opened, in 1858, the skating pond produced a skating craze. A hundred thousand people would arrive on a single afternoon. (Skating in Central Park felt so right for so long that it is one of the few New York subjects to produce two masterpieces a century apart: Winslow Homer's watercolor of the late eighteen-fifties, and the Modern Jazz Quartet's waltz a hundred years later.) It has become fashionable among leftist social historians to say that it was the generations of immigrants taking over the Park who made it into a playground, who made it work. But this does an injustice to Olmsted's vision. The Park is adaptable because that is the way Olmsted wanted it to be.

After Central Park, Olmsted became absurdly successful. Was there a patch of grass in nineteenth-century America that he *didn't* design? Stanford, Prospect Park, and the Biltmore Estate, in North Carolina; the space around the United States Capitol and preservation plans for Niagara Falls and Yosemite. Yet there is in Olmsted's life an enormous, cumulative sadness that does not seem to be merely psychiatric. Never again, after Central Park, could he light the spark of faith—the leap of logic between what he had seen in the South and what he wanted to make in New York. This was partly the natural consequence of the many hands that get involved in any big project. But it also came about because he had convinced his audience too well: the rhetoric of sylvan retreat drowned out the larger purpose of commonplace civilization. People wanted parks to escape to, and Olmsted's vision of a democratic park was transformed, by degrees, into something either merely picturesque or crassly utilitarian. (In New York, Boss Tweed took over Central Park for a while, and wanted to put up a statue of himself.) The melancholy of Olmsted's last, depressed years had many causes, most of them personal, but somewhere he must have known that in the end the parks he had made were mainly for looking at, not for "reunion."

THERE is a sadness hidden in Central Park; you confess it reluctantly only to discover that everybody shares it. In plain English, it's a very hard place to find your way around. That's the price of Olmsted's resistance to over-regimentation. How far is the Carousel from the Lake? What's the quickest path from the Wollman Rink to the Boathouse? Exactly where *is* the Ramble? You learn how to get around Central Park by experience. There's no fixed path to take you where you want to go.

If Olmsted's Park expresses liberal virtues, it also expresses some of the limitations of liberalism. Olmsted resisted a central allée, with the result that there is no central allée. In Central Park, you are never alienated, but you are often disoriented. The Park is never, quite, all yours. It adapts itself to you, but it never remembers you. The Park as it exists now is as different from the Park that a generation made in the late seventies—with its thirty-year-old roller-skaters and its frozen-yogurt stands, its oversized muffins and its kids with boom boxes that seemed to double in size and volume every six months—as that Park was different from Holden Caulfield's Park, with its ten-year-old roller-skating children and diffident adults, and as Holden's Park was different from the Park that a few people still recall from

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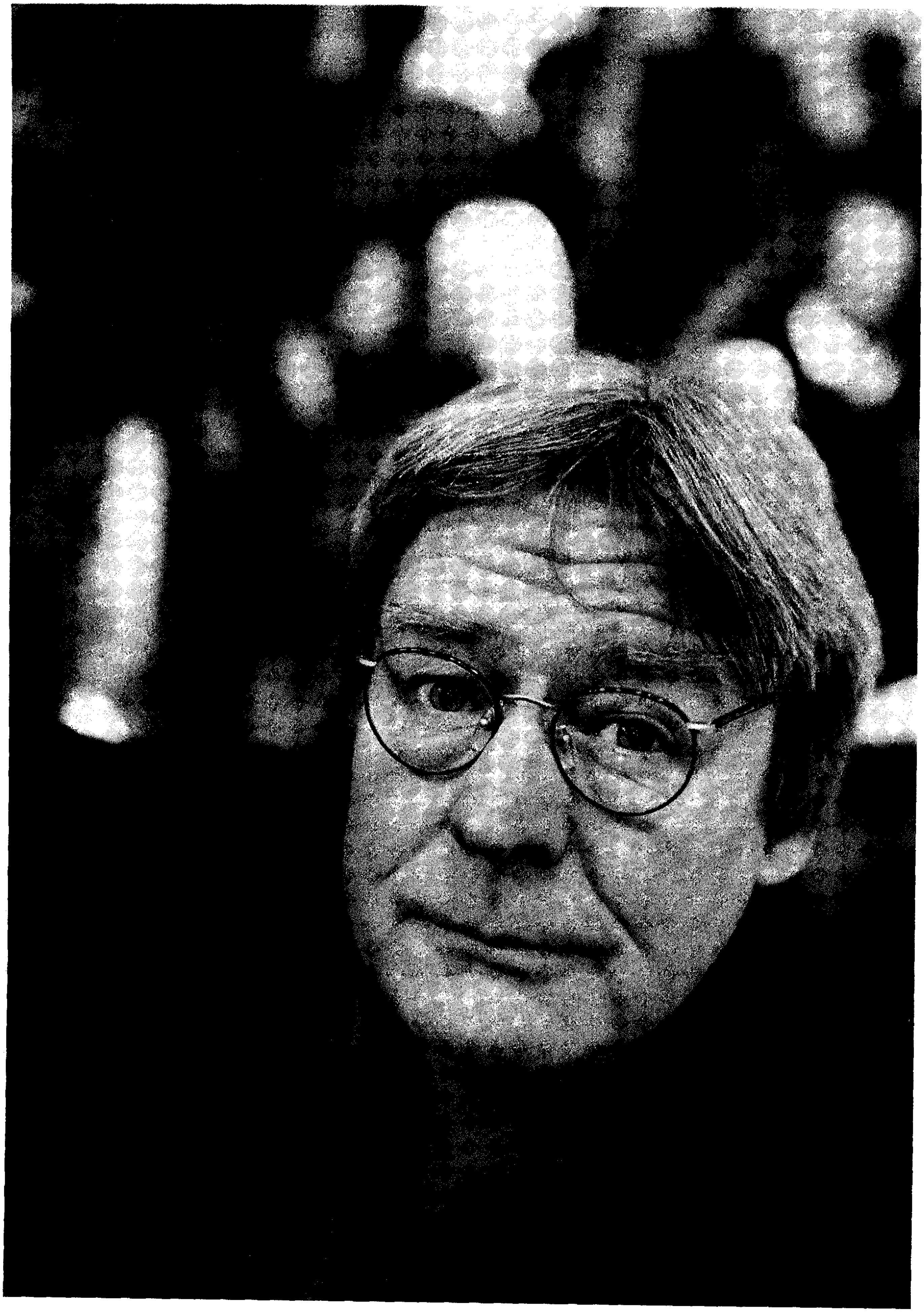
MUSICAL MAN

IN the ranks of modern film directors, the London-born Alan Parker probably has more experience with the musical than anyone else. Beginning with "Bugsy Malone" (1976), a singing gangster movie featuring a cast of children, and continuing with "Fame" (1980), "Pink Floyd—The Wall" (1982), "The Commitments" (1991), and last year's "Evita," Parker has coördinated more cinematography to music and choreography than anyone else outside of MTV.

In another era, this record would have been heralded: Vincente Minnelli and George Cukar won Academy Awards for "Gigi" and "My Fair Lady," respectively, as well as acclaim for their less confectionary work. But in a year when Oscar appears to have gone tone-deaf to any music but the Rach 3, "Evita" was ignored in each major category (after being nominated in each for a Golden Globe). This turn of events probably failed to surprise Parker, who has been nominated only for his "serious" films—"Midnight Express" (1978), "Mississippi Burning" (1988)—and generally dismissed for his lighter entertainments.

"Evita" may never have stood a chance. The very things that made the film bankable—the middlebrow appeal of Andrew Lloyd Webber, the mainstream draw of Madonna—proved a liability at Oscar time, when what the members of the Academy wanted was culture. That's a pity: in "Evita," a huge popular success, the director has won out over his material. Amid all the twirling taxi dancers and banner-waving workers, the film remains as cool-eyed as its narrator, Che (Antonio Banderas), an omnipresent everyman who's seen it all before and expects to see it all again. Even through the teary dénouement, in which Eva Perón appears on her balcony one last time to accept the ultimate award, Parker seems to be saying, "Wait: when the lights go up and the crowd goes home, people are still going to have to clean up this mess. And they're going to want some music, and maybe a bit of dance." —SEAN ELDER

Alan Parker in Los Angeles.



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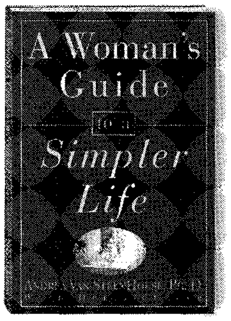

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the twenties, when virtuous troops of Boy Scouts slept beneath the stars. We can never step into the same Park twice.

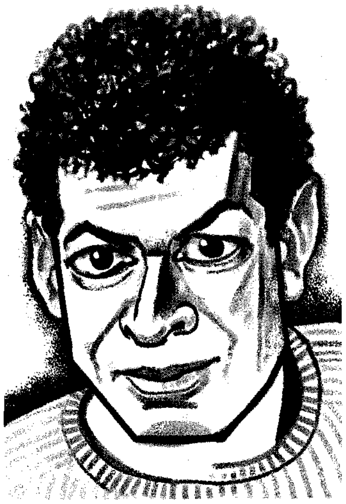
Unrequited love is the melancholy of liberal society. We constantly discover that things in which we have made an emotional investment are ones in which society has made merely a passing, prudential investment. We care more about the institution—the department-store window, the old neighborhood, the park—than the institution is allowed to care about us.

Olmsted wanted to make an American park, and he did, and to walk in his Park is to walk through a particular kind of American experience. We are often told that one of the problems with liberalism is that it brings nothing to the cultural table but a level playing field. Liberals may make art, but liberalism itself can build no monuments. The liberal is the man who reads the rules on the lid of the box and says, "Play fair." Liberalism *has* made some beautiful things, though—bridges, arts centers, parks—that have their own balance and logic. Perhaps what liberalism brings to the cultural table is not level and featureless, like a playing field, but adaptable and absent-minded, like a park—a park like Olmsted's, where everybody goes to play and nobody leaves a footprint. ♦

ADRIFT IN BROOKLYN

A novel of sailors and Sandinistas.

BY SCOTT L. MALCOMSON



Francisco Goldman

FRANCISCO GOLDMAN swears like a sailor. His *marinero* characters in "The Ordinary Seaman" (Atlantic; $23) live, semantically speaking, in a humid jungle of expletives. "Vos, you know what that truck sounded like?" Goldman's hero, Esteban, asks. "Like hundreds of honking little Cuban patos in cages all going *coño coño coño coño!*" It helps if you know Spanish—at least, enough to get the sound. Few of these terms translate well, and Goldman is wise to let them be. Swearing in Spanish can be a choral art, whereas in English it's more a percussive habit. Goldman knows both languages intimately, and loves them both, and it is perhaps this deep affection that enables him to write so joyfully about characters who are, nearly every one of them, cursed. In such rough lives, rough language can have an uplifting power.

Goldman's trusting sailors have been transported from the Central American tropics to Brooklyn, where, on a forgotten pier, they gaze up in disbelief at their new home: a vast, busted freighter. Their alleged captain and so-called first mate, after emphasizing the terrors of the surrounding borough, assure them that the ship just needs some fixing up and then they will be off to sea, where every man will make his fortune. This, however, is only a promise. Slowly or quickly, each seaman realizes that he may never see the ocean, not on this doomed boat. And so they are truly at sea, immobile drifters, without ever having sailed. What to do? Only Esteban, just out of his teens after four disastrous years with a Sandinista battalion, has the strength to explore his new world. He remembers one of the few skills he was taught in basic training, and climbs down a rope into Brooklyn.

"The Ordinary Seaman" doesn't have much action, really, and its characters are reflective only in fits and starts. Goldman's art lies in the juxtaposing of ordinary desires and extraordinary circumstances to create a pattern of wonderment; he has written an epic of the misplaced and misguided. While he does engineer tiny explosions of oddness—the captain's weakness for Amazonian shamans, a stray cat that is trained to sit on command—he animates his characters with the classic, common motives: selfishness, greed, and the longing for love. As in life, the first two provide most of the plot's force, though cold, battle-scarred Esteban, to the surprise of his shipmates, makes a pretty good lunge at the third.

Often in American literature poor people appear as middle-class people taking an instructive, if challenging, break from real life, or as choristers helping along the middle-class melody. Goldman, however, takes impoverishment as a constant, and he never mistakes the desire to escape it for an indication that poverty is, in any way, exceptional. This may be why the passages describing Esteban's time hunting contras in the jungle don't jar in a novel set in Brooklyn. Esteban, looking back, wonders, "Where's their political officer, that fucking Rodolfo, now? Whose ears is he filling with words about poetry and killing and revolution and love and heroes and martyrs now? Hijueputa, somewhere, right now, far away in Nicaragua, Rodolfo's mouth is still going. Vos, while here you are in los Estados Unidos, trying to work up the courage and resolve to disappear into it, puta, trying to find a reason to." As places for the hazarding of great aspirations, Brooklyn and revolutionary Nicaragua do have something in common.

In his previous, and first, novel, "The Long Night of White Chickens," Goldman also played with the relationship between Central America and the United States; and in both books the narrative voice winds promiscuously between the two cultures, slipping in and out of characters' thoughts like a benevolent thief. But the first novel had an identifiably *norteño* hero, Roger Graetz, with an identifiable mystery to solve. In "The Ordinary Seaman," Goldman has written a story without such customary moorings. The result is a novel both less familiar and more universal, with a rare largeness of heart.

Here many apparently disparate things get acquainted, as happens in port cities. Goldman brings Spanish and English into a beautiful partnership. His descriptions of sex and bodies somehow evoke both the epicure's taste and the starved lover's raging appetite. And finally, in an astonishing act of generosity, he recognizes how much the despicable captain and the honorable Esteban share the wish for love and the hope for an escape from greed. It's no mean accomplishment to rescue such precious goods from an empty vessel going nowhere. ♦

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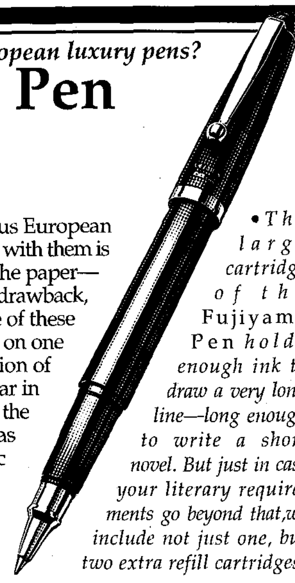

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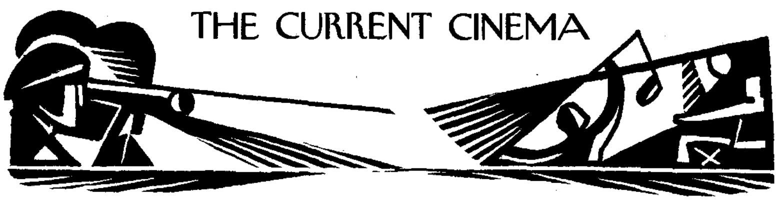


THE CURRENT CINEMA

OFF THE ROAD

Cronenberg philosophizes, and Jim Carrey tells the truth.

BY ANTHONY LANE

PEOPLE have been talking about "Crash" ever since the director David Cronenberg announced that he was planning to turn J. G. Ballard's notorious 1973 novel into a movie. One of the curious side effects of hype, of course, is that the longer and more loudly a work is discussed the less idea you have of what it is actually like. When I finally saw "Crash," it was something of a relief to discover that this mythical picture really did exist. So what is it? A road movie, a blue movie, a black comedy, or a load of white noise about nothing? A dose of each, I would say, although the best account of the film comes from one of the characters, Catherine (Deborah Kara Unger), as she sits by a hospital bed and murmurs, "Not a lot of action here."

She is visiting her husband, James Ballard; I have a sneaking suspicion that the name is intended to ring a bell. Ballard is played by James Spader, who seems to accept only roles that will allow him to stray from the path of normal behavior. Ballard has injured his leg in a crash; he hit another vehicle and killed the driver, but the dead man's fellow-passenger and wife, a doctor named Helen Remington (Holly Hunter), survived. At least, I *think* she survived; she certainly bared her breast at Ballard while they were trapped in the wreckage. (In the world according to Cronenberg, such a gesture counts as formal etiquette, like dropping a curtsy at court.) By the end of "Crash," however, I was wondering whether Ballard and Helen had in fact perished in the accident—whether the inhabitants of this movie, like the infected zombies in Cronenberg's "They Came from Within," are drawn from the ranks of the undead.

Carnal cars: Deborah Kara Unger and James Spader in "Crash," delivering a warning about our accelerated doom.

All this is particularly bad news for Holly Hunter, who is forced to replace her natural chirrup and joie de vivre with a grim somnambulism. Clenched of jaw and flat of voice, she doesn't register much joie even when she's making love—as if love, indeed, were the dirty downside of sex, the part we don't mention. The problem is that Cronenberg gives her, like almost everyone else in the film, almost nothing to do *except* have sex. "Crash" isn't plotted, it's programmed, and instead of narrative flow we are treated to a series of artful tableaux, as in a Peter Greenaway movie. When Ballard and Helen leave the hospital, they get it on in his car—a model identical to the one that he totalled. Into the equation comes Vaughan

(Elias Koteas), a weirdo who specializes in car crashes—the patterns they follow, the celebrities they squash, and so on. When he is not reënacting famous collisions for public consumption, he is using his car for equally brutal encounters—with an airport hooker, with Ballard's wife, and eventually with Ballard himself. Ballard, for his part, makes out with an unnamed assistant at work and with a crash victim wearing leg braces (Rosanna Arquette), who then clambers into Vaughan's Lincoln for a sedate cuddle with Helen. Most shocking of all, Ballard keeps making love to his wife. How square can you get? Catherine, meanwhile, has her own packed schedule: in the opening scene, she bends over, hitches up her skirt for the benefit of an airplane mechanic, and never, so to speak, looks back.

As you may gather, "Crash" is more or less "La Ronde" on wheels, although none of it is terribly sexy. There are moments that are nearly titillating, just as there are lines that are almost funny, but Cronenberg seems to have developed a disdain for the customary satisfactions of cinema. It is standard practice to jeer at the fakery of skin flicks, but "Crash" makes you nostalgic for the ersatz heartiness of porno performers; at least they're pretending, for the viewer's sake, to have a good time, whereas the characters in "Crash" are so unsmiling—so driven, in every sense—that they make you ashamed of ever having enjoyed yourself. They squirm around in the back seats of automobiles, doing what kids did in movies like "American Graffiti" but having none of the fun. That, I guess, is Cronenberg's point: he assumes that all the leisure and liberty have drained out of driving, and that we now live with the unglamorous reality of the car as monster—half weapon, half sex aid. I hate to introduce a note of common sense here, but if Cronenberg is literally suggesting that we are turned on by freeway pileups he's wrong: what arouses us is *not crashing*, otherwise known as speed. If, on the other hand, his movie is primarily a metaphor, all about the human race sliding into the thrall of its own machinery, then it's kind of obvious, and, anyway, Cronenberg has done it before. James Woods having a tape inserted into his abdomen in "Videodrome" is a better sick joke about biotechnology than James Spader fondling a steering column.

People are right to be shocked by "Crash," but for the wrong reasons. What it shows you, even in scarred closeup, is only mildly nauseating compared to what it insists on telling you. Cronenberg has become, you might say, an autodidact, and we have to sit there while his characters lecture us on the meaning of carnal cars. The worst offender is Vaughan. "For the first time, there's a benevolent psychopathology that beckons us," he tells Ballard. "For the first time, the car crash is a fertilizing rather than a destructive event—a liberation of sexual energy that mediates the sexuality of those who died with an intensity impossible in any other form." The first thing to be said about these lines is that, as Jack Lemmon pointed out to Tony Curtis, nobody talks like that. The second thing is that they are a pose—the sort of rarefied aesthetic, daringly indifferent to suffering, that was already well established when André Gide reworked it as the *acte gratuit* in "Les Caves du Vatican." Although "Crash" is every bit as explicit as the rumors suggested, it is not sexually explicit; it's bare-assed philosophy, and you may not want to watch.

Cronenberg addicts will argue that the film is beautiful, and there's no denying that, true to J. G. Ballard's book, it gleams with an awful, metallic loveliness. The camera presides with unhurried aplomb, coolly inspecting the ruins of bodywork; the entire movie is prefigured by a single, celebrated take from Godard's "Weekend," in which we were led along a procession of stalled and wounded cars. After a hundred minutes, however, such loftiness grows tiring to the eyes, and you gradually realize that "Crash" is using style to seal itself off from the mess—the truly accidental qualities—of the world beyond. The movie is a controlled experiment, in other words, and the characters are nothing but lab rats; cars outnumber people here, and there's an eerie lack of background noise. Yet, at the same time, Cronenberg the soothsayer needs to engage with the mechanized society—to tell us, or warn us, about our accelerated doom. Can he really have it both ways? He is usually such a cruel wit, and "Crash" could have been thrilling, nasty, and horribly alive; what threw it off the road and stopped it dead was the desire—the deep, ridiculous desperation—to be a work of art.

DID Jim Carrey have a bad David Cronenberg experience? I ask only because, although we may never fully understand what causes Carrey to behave as he does, it seems likely that his organic form was stolen by a mad professor and fused with a juke box, or a land mine. The odd thing about his cheery new film, "Liar Liar," which Tom Shadyac directs as if he were making mud pies, is that the peg of its plot is actually quite sophisticated. Carrey plays Fletcher Reede, who is mendacious, promiscuous, ambitious, and, in case you haven't guessed it, a lawyer. He is divorced but remains on close terms with both his ex, Audrey (Maura Tierney), and their son, Max (Justin Cooper). While Fletcher is too busy humping a senior partner, Miranda (Amanda Donohoe), to attend his son's fifth-birthday party, Max makes a wish that for twenty-four hours his father will not tell a lie. Naturally, the wish comes true; for instance, when Miranda sinks back with a sigh and asks how it was for him, Fletcher replies, "I've had better." And so on, for a whole day of agonized truth.

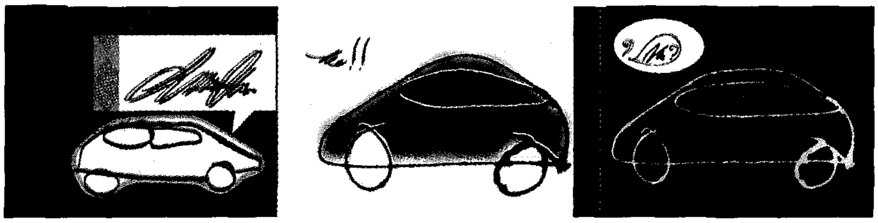
Or, let's face it, for about half an hour of sharp jokes. There's a patch in the middle of the picture where Carrey really takes off and launches himself at the other characters. His face-pulling, which normally bears only a slender relation to the surrounding drama, here becomes a sort of bendy battlefield for Fletcher's attempts to shut himself up, and you briefly see what a hard, rampant comedy "Liar Liar" could have been if it had kept faith with the disorderly possibilities of its premise. Imagine setting it in Washington, say, with lobbyists running for cover and political spin grinding to a halt; or what if the honesty became infectious, and every character picked it up in turn? As it happens, Shadyac and his screenwriters, Paul Guay and Stephen Mazur, make the disastrous decision to calm down the proceedings, and our poor hero is reduced to saying therapeutic things like "I'm a bad father" and "You know, this truth stuff is pretty cool." The truth stuff is that I, for one, have no wish to watch Jim Carrey find himself. I want to see him lose it, over and over again. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

CAR TALK

BY JOHN UPDIKE

A HUMAN being has vocal cords, a tongue, teeth, and, for expressive reinforcement, eyes and hands; a car has nothing but its horn and lights. Yet cars do talk; they can say "Howdy!" (a brief, deft toot) and "I hate you!" (a firmer, sustained blast) and "Do it!" (a flicker of the headlights). As their drivers are sealed ever more inaccessibly into a casing of audiotapes, cell phones, and deafening air-conditioning, automobiles for the sake of their own survival are evolving increasingly complex speech patterns. There is a distinct difference, to the attuned ear, between the highly respectful honk used in a service station during an annual car inspection in response to the command "Sound your horn" and the just perceptibly more urgent, less deferential beep that announces to the inhabitants of a domicile that a summoned taxi or car-pool van impatiently awaits.



Meaning is, as with other languages, a matter of context. The polite, minimal sounding of the horn—the automotive equivalent of a throat-clearing—that declares simple presence ("Howdy!") in nonthreatening circumstances becomes, while one is passing on a four-lane highway an automobile that has an aura of wanting to change lanes with an abrupt swerve, more admonitory—something like "Watch it, buddy, you've got two tons of moving metal right here in your blind spot!"

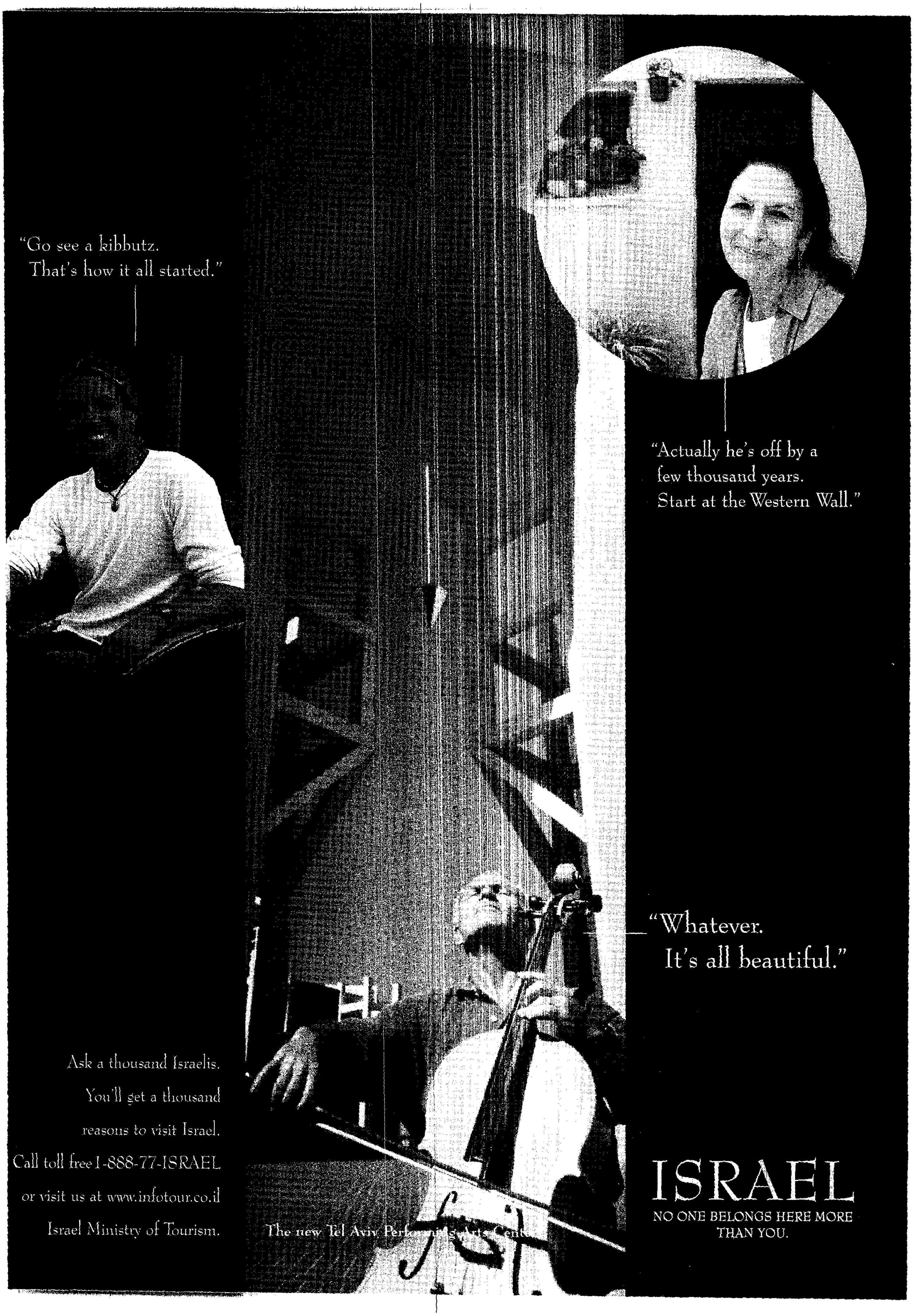
If no response is indicated, the same utterance, more insistently intoned, takes on a suggestion of rebuke and heightened anxiety: "Hey, you're riding me into the median strip!" And if the swerve does take place, within inches of one's front fender, a strengthened intonation moderates the meaning to, roughly, "You crazy blind idiot, go back to driving school!" Then, if no penitent reverse-swerve or apologetic slowing communicates regret, the next level of volume declares, "You bastard—you cut me off! Drivers like you should be in jail, and I'd ram you right in your vanity plate if I didn't hate fussing with the insurance agent and weren't already late for the dentist!"

As with birdsong and insect stridulation, impressive amounts of information are packed into virtually indistinguishable sounds. In city traffic, one moderate toot, not quite deferential, informs the car ahead at an intersection that the light has changed from red to green. "Let's go, daydreamer!" might be a translation. The same toot, amplified by a few decibels, points out to a truck being slowly unloaded that double-parking is illegal and obstructive, or to a taxi that passengers should not be unloaded in the middle of the avenue. Another few decibels suggest to an errant pedestrian, "I'd be within my rights to run you over, and my brother-in-law's a lawyer," or to a messenger on a bicycle, "Having thin wheels, Lycra shorts, and a Walkman on your head doesn't make you immune to the laws of physics. Someday you're going to get flattened, and don't look for me among the mourners!"

The highest, most prolonged volume of the horn transcends communication and expresses—at, say, the mouth of the Lincoln Tunnel—frustration to the point of insanity. The noise can be read as existential protest, a frantic desire on the part of automobiles to opt out of their very condition of car-ness, as cattle at the chute of the slaughterhouse moo to be released from their condition of steer-ness.

Car lights, too, say more than they used to. Having the controls on a stalk behind the steering wheel has considerably enhanced their eloquence. Flashed lights, for instance, once only hinted that a police car was lurking around the corner, but now, flicked demurely, say "Do it" and "Thank you," much as the Italian word *prego* says both "Please" and "You're welcome."

Headlights lit in broad daylight used to mean, "We're all in a funeral procession. Don't muscle in." But now such headlights, enlarging in the rearview mirror, cry out, "Here I come, hell for leather, and no doubt crazed on drugs!" Red tail-lights, braked into luminescence, can mean not only "I'm braking" but "Stop tailgating, I beg you!" The latter can be reacted to before it is consciously understood. As in many, even more highly evolved languages, signifiers can signify their opposites: at night, high-beam lights in your eyes mean either that the offending driver has forgotten to switch to the low beam or he is telling you that *you* have. Even turned-off lights can say something: in a locked car parked in your favorite curbside spot, the message reads, "Tough luck, kid. I got here first." ◆



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